

PORTRAITS

OF

CHRIST

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Lesson 1	4
Lesson 2	11
Lesson 3	16
Lesson 4	20
Lesson 5	34
Lesson 6	45
Lesson 7	59
Lesson 8	70
Lesson 9	79
Lesson 10	87

“THE WORD OF A FISHERMAN” BY FRANK BAILEY

“IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD

THE WORD THAT WAS BEFORE TIME BEGAN

PULSING DANCING CREATING SINGING

CALLING AND DRAWING FALLEN MAN

IN THE WORD IS LIGHT AND LIFE

FROM ITS RHYTHM ALL THINGS SURVIVE

CREATION PULSING DANCING SINGING

LIGHT AND LIFE THAT MAKE US ALIVE

THE WORD CAME AND DWELT AMONG US

TO LIVE ON EARTH AS A COMMON MAN

PULSING DANCING CALLING SINGING

UNVEILING THE FATHER’S ETERNAL PLAN

FROM THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER

COMES THE DANCE BEFORE TIME AND SPACE

PULSING DANCING SINGING DECLARING

GOD HAS JOINED THE HUMAN RACE”

LESSON ONE

THE PORTRAITS OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John the son of Zebedee wrote this Gospel. He was a Palestinian Jew, one of the 12 disciples, and a member of Jesus' inner apostolic circle. He was referred to as the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (13:23). John also wrote 1–3 John and Revelation. He likely wrote his Gospel account between A.D. 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and A.D. 100 (the reputed end of John's life). It was likely written from Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), one of the most important cities of the Roman Empire at the time. His original audience consisted of Jews and Gentiles living in the larger Greco-Roman world in Ephesus and beyond, toward the close of the first century A.D. -Author, Date, and Recipients FROM THE ESV BIBLE

The Setting of John-The events of the Gospel of John take place in Palestine, incorporated into the Roman Empire in 63 B.C. Appointed by the Romans as king over the Jews in 37 B.C., Herod the Great ruled until his death in 4 B.C. The Romans divided his kingdom among his descendants.

JC RYLE

"The Gospel of John, which begins with these verses, is in many respects very unlike the other three Gospels. It contains many things which they omit. It omits many things which they contain. Good reason might easily be shown for this unlikeness. But it is enough to remember that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote under the direct inspiration of God. In the general plan of their respective Gospels, and in the particular details,—in everything that they record, and in everything that they do not record,—they were all four equally and entirely guided by the Holy Ghost."

About the matters which John was specially inspired to relate in his Gospel, one general remark will suffice. The things which are peculiar to his Gospel are among the most precious possessions of the Church of Christ. No one of the four Gospel-writers has given us such full statements about the divinity of Christ,—about justification by faith,—about the offices of Christ,—about the work of the Holy Ghost,—and about the privileges of believers, as we read in the pages of John. On none of these great subjects, undoubtedly, have Matthew, Mark, and Luke been silent. But in John's Gospel, they stand out prominently on the surface, so that he who runs may read.

The five verses now before us contain a statement of matchless sublimity concerning the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is, beyond all question, whom John means, when he

speaks of "the Word." No doubt there are heights and depths in that statement which are far beyond man's understanding. And yet there are plain lessons in it, which every Christian would do well to treasure up in his mind.

We learn, firstly, that our Lord Jesus Christ is eternal. John tells us that "in the beginning was the Word." He did not begin to exist when the heavens and the earth were made. Much less did He begin to exist when the Gospel was brought into the world. He had glory with the Father "before the world was." (John 17:5.) He existed when matter was first created, and before time began. He was "before all things." (Colossians 1:17.) He was from all eternity.

We learn, secondly, that our Lord Jesus Christ is a Person distinct from God the Father, and yet one with Him. John tells us that "the Word was with God." The Father and the Word, though two persons, are joined by an ineffable union. Where God the Father was from all eternity, there also was the Word, even God the Son,—their glory equal, their majesty co-eternal, and yet their Godhead one. This is a great mystery! Happy is he who can receive it as a little child, without attempting to explain it.

We learn, thirdly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is very God. John tells us that "the Word was God." He is not merely a created angel, or a being inferior to God the Father, and invested by Him with power to redeem sinners. He is nothing less than perfect God,—equal to the Father as touching His Godhead,—God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds.

We learn, fourthly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things. John tells us that "by Him were all things made, and without Him was not any thing made that was made." So far from being a creature of God, as some heretics have falsely asserted, He is the Being who made the worlds and all that they contain. "He commanded and they were created." (Psalms 148:5.)

We learn, lastly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the source of all spiritual life and light. John tells us that "in Him was life, and the life was the light of men." He is the eternal fountain, from which alone the sons of men have ever derived life. Whatever spiritual life and light Adam and Eve possessed before the fall, was from Christ. Whatever deliverance from sin and spiritual death any child of Adam has ever enjoyed since the fall, whatever light of conscience or understanding any one has obtained, all has flowed from Christ. The vast majority of mankind in every age have refused to know Him, have forgotten the fall, and their own need of a Savior. The light has been constantly shining "in darkness." The most have "not comprehended the light." But if any men and women out of the countless millions of mankind have ever had spiritual life and light, they have owed all to Christ.

DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss all five points Jc Ryle said about The Gospel Of John

THE SON OF GOD

Jn. 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John's gospel is quite different from all the others. Jesus is Creator, the Word of the Father, the Light of the World and He became a man. 'He tabernacled amongst us', John said. He is the revelation of the Father who has existed with the Father from the beginning. John made it very clear that Jesus was God who came to us in the flesh.

I find it interesting how much the followers of Jesus changed. Everyone knew these disciples were commoners, they were fishermen for Pete's sake. Peter was changed into a powerful preacher and John recorded the things that he heard and saw that have changed the world for generations. The first eighteen verses of his gospel are unparalleled, they unveil the glory of God in Christ. John was a fisherman who wrote like a man from another world. The Word has been changing lives since the earliest of times. How could it not affect us? The Word is the very power of God that created all things. His word breaks chains of addiction, heals our broken bodies, and restores our soul. Feast on Him this year; let His changes take hold deep within your heart. 2022 is upon us, He is making all things new in every one of us.

WHY GOD BECAME MAN

Jn. 1:14 – So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

Why were we created in the first place? The Bible clearly teaches we were born to display God's glory and to enjoy Him forever. Obviously something went terribly wrong right off. Adam and Eve didn't get very far at all when they fell into sin and lost the blessing of walking with God. Of course the Lord already had His plan in place, He would become one of us and offer His own life as a man as our substitute and restore His plan of man walking in intimacy with Him. So this incredible being, Jesus of Nazareth is actually God who became a man. In His victory over death at His resurrection, He inherited amazing blessings for Himself and also for all people who believe in Him. Here is how Charles Spurgeon describes this.

“How can God refuse to bless those men who are in Christ? The everlasting Father must bless his only-begotten Son, and in blessing him he has blessed a man, and that man having all

the elect in his loins, they are necessarily all blessed in him. Look upon the person of Christ as that of a representative individual. Whatever Christ is, all his elect are, just as whatever Adam was all men who were in him became. If Adam fell, all manhood fell; if Christ stands and is honored and glorified, then all who are in Christ, that is the goodly fellowship of his elect, are all blessed in him. Now, it is utterly impossible but that God should bless Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ is forever one with God, and his manhood is also one with Godhead.”

So Jesus not only represents me in His death, He also represents me in His life. All the blessings of the Father that are poured on Christ while seated at the Father’s right hand are also poured on me. All the blessings of the Spirit are mine in Christ. This is the real blessing of Christmas. So maybe this Christmas we can focus on the true gifts that have eternal value, I am seated with Christ in heavenly places and all of His blessing is being poured over and into me.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the ways Jesus represents us.

GOD BECAME MAN

Jn.1:14 – And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

To think that infinite greatness took on the form of a simple man in Galilee, being raised by a simple carpenter, is really too hard to understand. He took on a human body and lived an average life in Galilee until.....He did at least until the Holy Spirit fell on Him. His humanity is why we celebrate Christmas. It’s hard to even think about it, much less say it, “God became a man”. Here is how Spurgeon describes the significance of the humanity of Christ.

“A prince who puts aside his crown, and clothes himself with beggar’s rags to investigate the miseries of his country, is but a worm condescending to his fellow worm. An angel that should lay aside his beauty, and become decrepit and lame, and walk the streets in pain and poverty to bless the race of man, were nothing, for this were but a creature humbling himself to creatures a “little lower than himself; but here is the Creator taking the creature into union with himself, the Immortal becoming mortal, the Infinite an infant, the Omnipotent taking weakness, even human weakness into union with his own person. We may truly say of Jesus, that he was weak as the dust, and yet as mighty as the Eternal God; liable to suffer, and yet God over all blessed for ever. O the depth of the love of Jesus!”

It's really impossible to overstate the blessing involved with the Lord taking on a human body. The Lord became a man once and for all. Because of His humanity He understands what it means to be lonely or abandoned and is able to help us in a very real way every time we come before Him. He became poor, that we might become rich, He took our sickness and our pain that we can experience a healthy life.

GOD BECAME HUMAN

Jn.1:14 – So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

This is the greatest of all mysteries. How can you even describe it? The Creator entered His creation, God became a man, or maybe the Eternal One entered into time? It is really impossible to grasp the majesty of this verse; we can only catch glimpses by the Spirit. Peter caught a glimpse when he said “You are the Christ”. Paul also saw the edge of this with his Jesus encounter on the road to Damascus. Then there was John in his visions in Revelation. What is going to be the most astounding of all is when we see Christ in both His natures in heaven. This is what John saw that made him weep uncontrollably. Here is an explanation from the Cornerstone Commentary:

“The Word became human.” This is the high point of the prologue—indeed, the high point of history. God has entered this world; his Word has become “flesh”; the Creator has become a creature. More than that, he has “made his home among us.” John chose a very particular term here *skēnoō*, which means he has “pitched his tent” or “tabernacled” among us. The image of the tabernacle *skēnē* is very prominent, especially with the correspondence between the glory of the Word and the “shekinah glory” of God that filled the Tabernacle (and later, the Temple). The shekinah, referring to God “dwelling” among his people) or presence of God was seen in the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day in the Exodus. This glory then filled the Tabernacle. This was what made the Tabernacle the most sacred object in the universe; the physical manifestation of God’s holy presence was there. The dwelling of God among his people was everything and will be the chief characteristic of the new heaven and new earth.”

This verse captures the essence of the miracle of Christ becoming a man. John saw His humanity and also saw His glory. This is what begins to happen in our lives when we are awakened to His love. His humanity is connected totally to our salvation. His deity is connected to His sovereign reign over all things. The combination of God and man is absolutely unthinkable.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

THE WORD OF GOD BECAME A MAN

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14 ESV

One of the problems that many people who are familiar with the Bible have is that we tend to miss the majesty that resides right under their noses. This verse is a great example of that dilemma. “Oh, I know that verse; I have heard that preached many times.” Many times we think we know something because we have the information that scripture offers. Many times we haven’t even seen the power and the majesty that the verse contains. The “word” in this verse is the word of the Father. The Father is eternal and has always thought and spoken words. His words are eternal. John also says that the word of the Father is God. God’s word is a distinct person. Also, we see this word who is an eternal person became a human. These words are beyond powerful; these are the very words of life. Here is how Barclay describes this amazing verse.

“Here we come to the sentence for the sake of which John wrote his gospel. He has thought and talked about the word of God, that powerful, creative, dynamic word which was the agent of creation, that guiding, directing, controlling word which puts order into the universe and mind into man. These were ideas which were known and familiar to both Jew and Greek. Now he says the most startling and incredible thing that he could have said. He says quite simply: “This word which created the world, this reason which controls the order of the world, has become a person and with our own eyes we saw him.” The word that John uses for seeing this word is *theasthai*; it is used in the New Testament more than twenty times and is always used of actual physical sight. This is no spiritual vision seen with the eye of the soul or of the mind. John declares that the word actually came to earth in the form of a man and was seen by human eyes. He says: “If you want to see what this creating word, this controlling reason, is like, look at Jesus of Nazareth.”

John saw Him with physical eyes throughout His three year ministry and after His death and resurrection. We too can see Him with the eyes of our heart as they are opened by the grace of God.

SON OF GOD SON OF MAN

Rev.5:5,6 – And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Son of God or Son of Man; what are the significances of these two titles of our beloved Jesus of Nazareth. Apparently the Lord was fond of His title Son of Man and used it often when referring to Himself during His short time on earth. On the other hand, He has always been the Son of God enjoying intimacy with the Father from eternity. He has always been the radiance of the Father’s glory and the eternally begotten Son of the Father. He is the eternal Son of God. He became the Son of Man when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. He became a man as He took on a human body. The mystery of all mysteries is this, He lives forever now as a man and is the eternal Son of God. Here is a quote from Edwards describing this mystery.

“There dwells Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the Prince of peace and love, who so loved the world that he shed his blood, and poured out his soul unto death for it. There dwells the Mediator, by whom all God’s love is expressed to the saints, by whom the fruits of it have been purchased, and through whom they are communicated, and through whom love is imparted to the hearts of all the church. There Christ dwells in both his natures, his human and divine, sitting with the Father in the same throne.”

To me, this is the most amazing revelation of our Lord and His plan. He is eternally God, the Father’s only begotten Son. He became part of the human race by choice, becoming part of His own creation. This incarnation was not just for thirty three short years, He became a man forever. I look forward to seeing Jesus for myself. To see Him as Son of Man and Son of God is absolutely unthinkable.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the points Edwards makes concerning Jesus Christ.

LESSON TWO

THE SON OF MAN

DESIRING GOD MINISTRIES SAYS

“Early church writers generally understood “Son of Man” along these lines. They treated it as a beautifully succinct reminder that Jesus is fully human, often as the opposite pole of “Son of God.”

- Ignatius (d. 140s): “Jesus Christ — who according to the flesh is of the lineage of David, the Son of Man” (Letter to the Ephesians, 20.2).
- Justin Martyr (d. 165): “He spoke of himself as ‘Son of Man,’ either because of his birth through a virgin . . . or because Adam was his father” (Dialogue with Trypho, 100.3).
- Irenaeus (d. 202): “Our Lord is . . . Son of Man, because from Mary he has his generation according to humanity, being made Son of Man” (Against Heresies, 3.19.3).
- Tertullian (d. 220): “Christ is neither able to lie, that he would pronounce himself ‘Son of Man’ if it were not truly so, nor could he be regarded as son of man if he were not born of a human” (Against Marcion, 4.10.6).
- Origen (d. 253): “The Son of God is said to have died, namely, with regard to that nature that was able to accept death — and he is designated ‘Son of Man’” (On First Principles, 2.6.3).

But Jesus uses “Son of Man” in ways that stretch far beyond mere humanness. Several times, Jesus states that, as “Son of Man,” he will sit on a heavenly throne, come with the clouds, receive glory and power, and be surrounded by angels (Matthew 24:30; 25:31; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; 22:69). ‘Son of Man’ sounds simple on the surface, but this phrase masks the astounding depths of the person and work of Jesus. In Daniel’s vision of heaven, the Ancient of Days takes his throne of judgment, and “with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man . . . and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom” (Daniel 7:13–14). The setup is staggering. Someone is enthroned with God in heaven to rule forever, and he appears as a “son of man” because he is better than the beastly kings of earth (Daniel 7:17). By deftly applying phrases of Daniel 7 to himself, Jesus unveils that he is that Son of Man. And Daniel’s vision is not about simple flesh and blood. It is ripe for far more. Preexistence: In this vision, Daniel glimpses the preincarnate Son in the throne room — just as Isaiah saw Jesus’s glory (John 12:37–41; Isaiah 6:1–10), and Ezekiel saw a “man” enthroned in the highest heaven (Ezekiel 1:26–28). Present authority: Multiple times, Jesus invokes his identity as Son of Man to

claim authority on earth that no mere man could claim, such as unrestricted forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:5–12) and lordship over the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). Jesus’s divine prerogatives are rooted in his status as heavenly Son of Man.

Suffering to accomplish redemption: Jesus also connects “Son of Man” with the vicarious suffering of the Isaianic “servant” (Isaiah 52:13–53:12) when he predicts how, as Son of Man, he would suffer and die for sins (Mark 9:31). Heavenly enthronement: Upon his ascension, Jesus is enthroned as Son of Man at the right hand of the Father on high (Acts 7:56; cf. Revelation 1:12–16) — further connecting the phrase to Psalm 110:1. Having accomplished salvation, the man Jesus Christ now reigns in heaven. Return in glory: Finally, Jesus will return from heaven as Son of Man, the divine judge and eternal king (Matthew 19:28–30). On closer inspection, “Son of Man” is just as much about Jesus’s divinity as it is his humanity. This title proves to be perhaps the most effective way Jesus reveals and conceals who he really is. By using “Son of Man,” he is able to minister undercover, so to speak, on earth. For many observers then and now, the cryptic phrase just states the obvious: he’s human. But those who know the Scriptures see that “Son of Man” conceals something amazing: he is the one divine-man, grounded in heaven!

DISCUSSION

Lets Expound On The Son Of Man!

1. Comment on Jesus calling himself the “son of man”.

NEW WINE, NEW WINESKIN

John 2:11 – This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

The Lord is always turning water into wine, you just have to have eyes to see it. Everyday rain comes down from heaven, it is taken in by the roots of the grapevine, and it makes the fruit of the vine in time. In the miracle in John 2 all Jesus does is speed up the process, these signs are happening all around us everyday. Watermelons, lemons, tomatoes, zucchini; these are all the work of God that happens right under our noses. The greater miracles are also happening all around us; drug users being set free, prostitutes becoming women of God, thieves becoming ministers; redemption is happening all around us, He is always turning water into wine. Here is how Ellicott’s describes this sign.

“For him they are simply “works,” and these “works” are “signs.” He thinks of our Lord as the agent in all creation, and the source of all life; but this being so, no display of power impresses him, and no wonder startles him. All is the natural “work” of the divine worker; but

like Himself, every work is also a word. It speaks to him who hath ears to hear. It is a “sign” to him who can spiritually interpret. That at His will water became wine, is as natural as that, by that will, the rain passing through earth and vine and grape should become wine.”

This sign now becomes personal, He is turning your water into wine. Empty lives find purpose, boring lives find passion, ugly lives are made beautiful. Jesus is turning your water into wine. Here is how Barclay sees it.

“When John told this story he was remembering what life with Jesus was like; and he said, “Wherever Jesus went and whenever he came into life it was like water turning into wine.” This story is John saying to us: “If you want the new exhilaration, become a follower of Jesus Christ, and there will come a change in your life which will be like water turning into wine.”

2000 years have come and gone and Jesus is still turning water into wine. I think what excites me the most is that He always saves the best for last and I get to be right in the middle of it. Jn. 2:15 – And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple... John 2:10 and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

“This is a great picture of the work of the Holy Spirit and how He has saved the best for last. I am convinced that a great revival is building as we come to the end of the age. It will be even better and stronger than those great Pentecostal days marking the beginning of the Christian Church. The joyful anticipation deepens as the day draws near”

Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding. This speaks volumes about The Lord; His value of marriage, His love for people, His willingness to provide in time of need; but it also serves as a living parable about the whole point of His ministry. Jesus came to fulfill the law and offer to man a new life. He came to offer us a new quality of life through His new and better covenant. When the wedding feast ran short of wine for the celebration, Jesus took action. He used the large barrels of water normally used for the rites of purification. He turned about 120 gallons of water into wine! This wine, of course, speaks of celebration. It speaks to us about the nature of the new life we have received in Christ. This new life is infused with joy. The very joy of The Lord invades our life as Christ comes into our lives. We are no longer caught up in the tedious activities of religious observation, we have been filled with the Holy Spirit. Our lives are saturated with the new wine, the joy of The Lord. Here is how Matthew Henry describes this miracle and its relation to the law and the new and better covenant.

“It was done in water-pots: There were set there six water-pots of stone. For what use these water-pots were intended: for the legal purifications from ceremonial pollutions enjoined by the law of God, and many more by the tradition of the elders. The Jews eat not, except they wash often, and they used much water in their washing, for which reason here were six large water-pots provided. It was a saying among them,—He who uses much water in washing will gain much wealth in this world. To what use Christ put them, quite different from what they were intended for; to be the receptacles of the miraculous wine. Thus Christ came to bring in the grace of the gospel, which is as wine, that cheereth God and man (Judg. ix. 13), instead of the shadows of the law, which were as water, weak and beggarly elements. These were water-pots, that had never been used to have wine in them; and of stone, which is not apt to retain the scent of former liquors, if ever they had had wine in them. They contained two or three firkins apiece; two or three measures, baths, or ephahs; the quantity is uncertain, but very considerable.”

I think it is incredible that turning water into wine is the first miracle. It tells me the significance of Christ coining the phrase “new wine” when speaking of the life He came to bring.

“Even though many Christians shun away from the true implications of this miracle, the message of this miracle is like the elephant in the room that no one wants to talk about.”

People want to argue about the alcoholic content of this wine in the miracle missing the very essence of the miracle itself. He came to turn our water into wine, He came to make your boring, normal life into something supernatural. As we embrace Christ and bring our waterpots of formalism and symbolism to Him, He turns our water into wine. We are filled to the brim with the joy of The Lord.

DISCUSSION

1. How has the new wine impacted your life?

ZEAL FOR MY FATHERS HOUSE

John 2:17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.”

Jesus was different than many people imagine. Just think about this one event, Jesus cleaned out the temple with a whip. Shocking! This event happened at the very beginning of Jesus ministry, the Religious leaders didn’t forget. How could they? There were only two possible conclusions that you could come to, Jesus was wrong or He was right. If He was right,

there needed to be enormous change starting from the top down in the nation of Israel. The priests were not about to let that happen. There was too much influence and money at stake, spirituality had nothing to do with it as far as the Pharisees were concerned. They liked their power and their perks, a religious fanatic was not about to get in their way. Here is how Albert Barnes describes this event.

“The zeal of thine house means extraordinary concern for the temple of God; intense solicitude that the worship there should be pure, and such as God would approve.” -Albert Barnes

“Hath eaten me up. Hath absorbed me, or engaged my entire attention and affection; hath surpassed all other feelings, so that it may be said to be the one great absorbing affection and desire of the mind. Here is an example set for ministers and for all Christians. In Jesus this was the great commanding sentiment of his life. In us it should be also. In this manifestation of zeal he began and ended his ministry. In this we should begin and end our lives. We learn, also, that ministers of religion should aim to purify the church of God....The preaching of every minister should be such that wicked men will feel that they must either become Christians or leave the house of God, or spend their lives there in the consciousness of guilt and the fear of hell.”

“Zeal for God’s house, that becomes the passion of every born again Christian.”- Frank Bailey

They love the place God has chosen to dwell, He has chosen to dwell in His house. Jesus was announcing a change in the worship of God. The Lord would no longer live in a temple made by hands, He would live in the body of Christ, the New Testament “temple” and dwelling place of God. Having a zeal for God’s house starts with us; we have to cleanse our own life, our own temple that God can be glorified.

DISCUSSION

1.How does zeal for our Fathers house affect our personal lives and the way we worship?

LESSON THREE

“THE DIVINE TEACHER”

Matt.21:14 -16 – “Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant and said to Him”. “Do you hear what they are saying?” they asked. And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, Out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants, You have perfected praise?”

Spurgeon said; “Brethren and sisters beloved, the Holy Spirit teaches us “all things,” because it is necessary for us to learn all things, and so He comes to bring to our remembrance not part, but in turn, the whole of our Lord’s wondrous teaching. That teaching is essential to our knowledge of divine things, to our comfort and progress in spiritual things—that remembrance is part of our soul’s discipline and advance. If the Christian were fully equipped to know and understand the divine mind without the teaching of the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit would not have been given. We should not find the Holy Spirit here unless it were necessary that He should be here. Even with Christ for a teacher, mark—so that there was no fault in the teacher—with Christ for a teacher, the disciples did not learn these truths without the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Are we not frequently inattentive? Do we not sometimes feel a want of interest in the truths which we receive from the Word, which I may now call the lips of Christ? And often on the Lord’s day you will hear most delightful truth, but if you are not interested in it, it does not catch your mind. We are not so roused to drink in their spirit. We do not bring our souls up to the truth and it is not any wonder, therefore, if we do not learn those truths which are so spiritual, that they can only be grasped by a soul in active, alert exercise. We seize the fair fruit of divine truth with a careless, hasty hand, mar its heavenly bloom, never knowing its richest beauty and essence—and then we feel how true of us are Paul’s words, inspired of the Holy Spirit, written to certain Christians, “Not as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, and babes in Christ Jesus.

He goes onto to say; “Has the Holy Ghost taught you anything? Is that a hard question? It is one that was asked of old—“Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” I am solemnly afraid that there are some professors who are content to have been convinced of sin, to have been led to trust in Christ, but who, after that, are utterly indifferent to the Holy Spirit as their teacher. They sit in the house of God, but they do not apply their minds to learn the truth. They pin their faith to somebody’s sleeve and are content to believe according to the last speaker

they hear, so that they will one day believe one thing, and another day another thing, and so are carried about with every wind of doctrine.”

DISCUSSION

1. Have we ceased to study the scriptures? How important is the Bible in your everyday life?
2. What steps can we continue to take to be learners of the gospel?

Jn.3:7,8 – You shouldn't be amazed by my statement, 'You must be born from above!' For the Spirit-wind blows as it chooses. You can hear its sound, but you don't know where it came from or where it's going. So it is within the hearts of those who are Spirit-born!

Nicodemus was more comfortable with absolutes; you live a certain way and certain things will happen. You could say he was ingrained in being dependent on his own ability to follow the Lord and obey the law. That's really how it is with all religions, there is a code of ethics and religious observations. Those who follow them get the rewards. Jesus was talking about something totally different and apparently quite foreign to Nicodemus. Jesus was bringing him face to face with his need for salvation. He was also confronting Nicodemus with the idea that only the Spirit of God could change him and allow him to live a life pleasing to God. This was quite frankly totally humiliating for this esteemed teacher. Jesus was introducing Nicodemus to the Holy Spirit. He told him the Spirit is like the wind. It is powerful, unpredictable, and quite mysterious. The terminology Jesus was using caused Nicodemus to think about the wind, the Spirit of God, and the Breath of God. Nicodemus was being swept into a move of the Spirit of God. This would be the major difference between the old and new covenant. Here are some thoughts from the Passion Notes on this passage.

“The Spirit moves you as he chooses, and you hear his voice, but you don't know where he came from or where he goes.” The Aramaic is so rich and multilayered in this passage. Perhaps it could be paraphrased as, “The wind, the breath, and the Spirit are moved by mysterious moods and in their own wonderful ways. When you feel their touch and hear their voices you know they are real, but you don't understand how they flow and move over the earth. In this same mysterious way so is the way of everyone who is born by wind, breath, and Spirit.” We also need the wind of God to transform our lives. The Wind, His Breath, and His Holy Spirit affect our lives dramatically. He transforms us with the new birth, He empowers us with His rushing mighty Wind, and brings us into incredible intimacy by His breath. The mysterious Spirit Wind is the very source of our lives.”

As we have noted often-times before, the miracles of Jesus were often a glimpse into the unseen world of the Spirit. In this passage you have a very interesting contrast, you have the physically blind people who can suddenly see. In contrast you have the spiritual leaders who are blinded by their own prejudiced and preconceived thoughts about the kingdom of God. If anyone should see, it should be the Pharisees, the teachers of God's word. But in them you find a stubborn blindness, a willingness to stay blind and block others from seeing the light of Christ. Here is how William Barclay describes this.

“They were too proud in their self-satisfaction to submit. If Jesus was right, they were wrong. The Pharisees were so well satisfied with themselves that they saw no need to change; and they hated anyone who wished to change them. Repentance is the gate whereby we all must enter the kingdom. Repentance means the recognition of the error of our ways, the realization that in Christ alone there is life, and to surrender to him and to his will and power, whereby alone we can be changed. They were too prejudiced to see this. Their eyes were so blinded by their own ideas that they could not see in Jesus Christ the truth and the power of God.”

The blind people came to Jesus and went away seeing. Those that thought they could see still stumbled around in their own darkness, unable to see the reality of who Christ was even though He was standing right in front of them. This is why Jesus came, to open the eyes of the blind that they may see Christ and to heal the lame so that they may follow Christ. It wasn't that complicated, only arrogance can make something so simple into something so hard to understand. Follow close to Jesus and you will be like the blind who can now see and the lame who are following Him in the way.

DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever looked back in your life and saw the hand of God dealing with you or guiding you to truth? Discuss this?

1. How important is it to consider the “wind blows where it wants to with our families?” Lift them up in prayer tonight.

John 3:3 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Sometimes the truth is as hard to see as the nose on our face. Recently, I came face to face with one of these noses. It was so simple I had somehow missed it. What am I talking about? I am talking about the unsettled feeling I have had with the recent emphasis on the so-

called message of grace. I know His mercy is everlasting and His grace is unfailing but something wasn't ringing true. That's when it suddenly hit me. It wasn't what was being said that was troubling, it was what was left unsaid. His grace is amazing but it does more than just cover our sins. It's His grace that leads us to the born again experience. He is not happy leaving us as He finds us, He insists upon change. Since we could not change ourselves, divine intervention is essential. As Jesus Himself said, "You must be born again." Here is Andrew Murray talking about this essential truth.

"I want to draw your attention to the most delightful subject in the world, to help you to rejoice in the adorable God whose being is pure love. He is the inexhaustible source of meekness, delight, blessing, goodness, patience, and grace. These are like many streams breaking out of the abyss of the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The triune God who is forever giving forth nothing but the same gifts of light and love, of blessing and joy, whether before or after the Fall, either for angels or for men. No good can become part of you unless it is by way of a birth from above. Your nature must also be restored; it must be part of this new birth. It must cooperate in the production of new life before the Spirit of love can have a birth in it. For love is delight and delight cannot arise in any creature until its nature is in a delightful state, or is possessed of that in which it must rejoice. The reason why God came to earth as human was to make it possible for the Triune to dwell in you."

So the truth is that covering our sins is not the ultimate purpose of the cross. The ultimate purpose was total transformation. "Unless a man is born again he will never see the kingdom of God." So the next time you hear someone talking about grace as if it is an excuse to live however they want to, know this; there is a better way. The kindness of the Lord leads us and grants us total life change through the power of repentance.

DISCUSSION

1. Why do we need total transformation?
2. What is so amazing about grace?

LESSON FOUR

JOHN 4-JESUS THE SOUL WINNER

John 4:10,14- Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

What makes a good soul winner? Is it someone who has a lot of knowledge about the Bible, or someone that has gone to Bible School? Could it be someone that has a great personality or a knack at communication? These are not the things you see in the Bible or in the life of this woman from Samaria but she affected her whole city. Not only did Jesus stay in her town for three days teaching the people affected by her words, Samaria became the hub of one of the great New Testament revivals. This troubled woman had an effect on her whole region. What was it that caused this woman's conversion to have such a great effect on her world? Actually it was her conversion itself. She had gone through five marriages and was living with another man at that time (sounds like not much has changed in 2000 years). Her troubled life had surely had its toll on this woman, depression is just part of the package with her lifestyle. Her encounter with Christ was more than just a change of her religious beliefs, something dramatic had happened in her life, something so big it could not be hidden. She obviously got a taste of this living water Jesus was telling her about, the kind of water that satisfies our soul and becomes a spring of life bubbling up inside of us. This taste of the reality of God turned this woman's life upside down. As she ran to her friends in town there was no denying something had changed, she had a smile that would light up everything around her. She was gushing out living water everywhere she went. Her friends had to find out what had happened. She was crying out as she ran through the town, "Come see a man who told me all I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" All of her friends went out to meet Jesus, it wasn't long until they were all experiencing the Lord for themselves.

So what makes a good soul winner, someone whose life has been changed, not just a change in what they say they believe, but a change that flows out of their very soul.

THE FIELDS ARE WHITE

John 4:35 Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.

Charles Spurgeon- "Turn your eyes to Calvary. Behold the Lord of Life nailed to a cross, with the thorn-crown about his brow, with bleeding head, and hands, and feet. What! can you look upon this miracle of miracles, the death of the Son of God, without feeling within your bosom a marvelous adoration that language never can express? And when you feel the blood applied to your conscience, and know that he has blotted out your sins, you are not a man unless you start from your knees and cry, Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. Can you bow before the Crucified in loving homage, and not wish to see your Monarch master of the world? Out on you if you can pretend to love your Prince, and desire not to see him the universal ruler. Your piety is worthless unless it leads you to wish that the same mercy which has been extended to you may bless the whole world. Lord, it is harvest-time, put in thy sickle and reap."

Have you felt the pull of the Lord to win souls recently. I distinctly feel we are moving into a time of prophetic fulfillment in our world today. It's time for the laborers to come into the fields. It's time for this next generation to step up and enter into this time of harvest. Don't say harvest is still somewhere in the future, the fields are ripe, today is the day. Today is your day!

RANDOM APPOINTMENTS

John 4:4 "And He had to pass through Samaria."

The Lord didn't pass through Samaria by accident, He had an unscheduled appointment with this woman who had been married five times. Now John didn't divulge the details of this woman's sorry life, but it wasn't a pretty picture. Five husbands? She wasn't a happy camper. Her joy was long gone. She was just trying to get through another miserable day, that's when Jesus showed up. "Give me a drink", she heard the traveling stranger say. "How is it that you are asking this Samaritan woman for a drink?" Jewish men could never correspond with a Samaritan, especially a woman. She had no idea who He was or what was about to happen. You know the rest of the story, He told her about drinking, and living water, and a spring within that would satisfy her forever. Her life would never be the same.

That's how it always is with Jesus, unscheduled appointments, interrupted schedules, and lives permanently changed. That's how it was with Saul of Tarsus. One minute he is swearing about Christian tongue talkers in the temple and some horrible trip to Damascus, then the next

minute, he is on his face in the dirt, worshipping the crucified carpenter that he hated more than anyone on earth. The next thing you know, Saul is on a basket ride over the wall in Damascus, his life long journey for Christ had begun. That's how it is with Jesus, suddenly He appears out of nowhere and then, all bets are off.

How could we forget Bartimaeus, and his random appointment. It was just another day of darkness, he had been blind all of his life. Suddenly there was a crowd drawing near, shouting, praising, laughing. Before he knew it, he was caught up in the moment, shouting the name of Jesus, until he found himself standing right in front of Him. Suddenly, someone turned the lights on, brightness flooded his senses, then he saw for the first time. There he was, looking into the smiling face of Jesus, this moment was too good for words. Bartimaeus never wanted to lose this feeling that he had in those moments with Jesus. What did he do? He began to follow Jesus down the road.

Maybe you can relate to one of these characters. Maybe all your dreams have been smashed like the Samaritan woman, everyday you are just trying to overcome the depression nagging at your soul. Or maybe you are angry, like Saul of Tarsus, somebody is messing things up in your life and you want to put a stop to it. Or maybe, you are more like Bartimaeus. Maybe you are sick and don't know how you will ever have a normal life, all hope seems to be gone. If so, you are in a good place. You are a candidate for one of His random appointments. You might be thinking, "that always happens to someone else, never to me". Nope, I think you're wrong. Actually He is standing here right now, ready or not, He is knocking on your door. Are you going to let Him in?

DISCUSSION

1. Do we believe that our steps are ordered by the Lord? If that is the case, just how important is it that we become light bearers to those we meet everyday?
2. Share a random God appointment you had recently.

COME SPRINGS OF LIVING WATER

Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." -JOHN 4:13,14

“Will never thirst”, how could that possibly be? What is Jesus speaking of? He is describing a thirst for spiritual things that replaces our thirst for the things of this world. He said that if we drink the water He has to give, this water will become a perpetual fountain bubbling up

inside of us. The result is not only a spiritual awakening, but a passion for the things of God. Jesus is describing an incredible spiritual revolution that flows from God Himself. Jonathan Edwards spoke of this fountain in his "Treatise on Grace". He said, " the sum of all good which the saints have in this world, is that spring of living water within them which we read of in John 4:10 and those rivers of living waters flowing from within them which we read of in John 7:37,38 which we are there told is the Holy Spirit. And the sum of all happiness in the other world, is that river of living water which flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, which is the river of God's pleasures, and is the Holy Spirit, which is often compared in sacred Scripture to water, to the rain and dew, and rivers and floods of waters".

I love the phrase Edwards used, "the sum of all good". He was saying all that we have of true value in life comes from the Lord. How is it that most of us value other things more than the things of God? If we are honest with ourselves, we tend to have stronger feelings for life's pleasures and experiences than for God Himself. How can our "value system" be changed? Look again at what Jesus said, "whoever drinks of this water that I have to give shall never thirst." Did you get it? There is something in the living water itself that affects us, it actually changes our thirst, or our value system, so that we begin to agree with Edwards that this living water is " the sum of all good which we have in this world".

Do you know who Jesus is? He is the radiance of the Father's glory, the very imprint of the Father's nature. It was by Him that all things were created and He upholds all things by the word of His power. He is the Word of the Father who became a man, He is the heavenly high priest, and the minister of the heavenly sanctuary. He is the supplier of all the resources of all His creatures, He holds the wind in His fists, and determines the rising and falling of the kings of the earth. He holds the past, present, and future in His hands, He created time and space and He Himself inhabits eternity. When Jesus ministered to the woman at the well that is what He had in mind. If you knew the gift of God and who was making you this offer, if you only knew. Matthew Henry spoke about this gift 300 years ago, this message is timeless.

"He hints to her what she should know, but was ignorant of: If thou knew the gift of God, that is, as the next words explain it, who it is that saith, Give me to drink. If thou knew who I am. She saw him to be a Jew, a poor weary traveller; but he would have her know something more concerning him that did yet appear. Jesus Christ is the gift of God, the richest token of God's love to us, and the richest treasure of all good for us; a gift, not a debt which we could demand from God; not a loan, which he will demand from us again, but a gift, a free gift. It is an unspeakable privilege to have this gift of God proposed and offered to us; to have an opportunity of embracing it: "He who is the gift of God is now set before thee, and addresses himself to thee; it

is he that saith, Give me to drink; this gift comes a begging to thee." Though Christ is set before us, and sues to us in and by his gospel, yet there are multitudes that know him not. They know not who it is that speaks to them in the gospel, that saith, Give me to drink; they perceive not that it is the Lord that calls them."

DISCUSSION

1. How about you? Do you know how powerful, how loving, and how near this One is who tells you to ask Him for a drink? Go ahead, I dare you. Just ask Him and see what happens. The well will start to bubble, the living water will start to flow, and then; your life will really begin.

COME AND DRINK

John 4:10,14 "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. 14 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

This is one of the most life changing passages of scripture. The woman in the story represents all of us in our pursuit. "Pursuit of what?" you might ask. Why, the pursuit of happiness. After all that is what we are all looking for. We may not admit it, but that is what our lives have always been about. The woman in this story had bought into the age old lie, if I can just marry the right guy, then I will be set. It is not just the American dream but the dream in every woman's heart. All she ever wanted was to be loved and to have her basic needs met, but it never happened. After marrying five men, the next time she didn't even bother with an official marriage. "What is the use?" she thought. They are all alike, I will just be disappointed again. That's when she met this different kind of man, that's when she fell into the joy she had always wanted, that's when she was surprised by joy. Check out Charles Spurgeon's comments on this spiritual drinking.

"Pity expressed herself most plainly, for Jesus cried, which implies not only the loudness of his voice, but the tenderness of his tones. He entreats us to be reconciled. We pray you, says the Apostle, as though God did beseech you by us. What earnest, pathetic terms are these! How deep must be the love which makes the Lord weep over sinners, and like a mother woo his children to his bosom! Surely at the call of such a cry our willing hearts will come. Provision is made most plenteously; all is provided that man can need to quench his soul's thirst. To his conscience the atonement brings peace; to his understanding the gospel brings the richest

instruction; to his heart the person of Jesus is the noblest object of affection; to the whole man the truth as it is in Jesus supplies the purest nutriment. Thirst is terrible, but Jesus can remove it. Though the soul were utterly famished, Jesus could restore it.”

DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever been surprised by joy? In the least likely of places, you had looked every where else, but suddenly joy met you in the presence of the Lord. Jesus promised this woman a joy that would never go away, a joy that is birthed in intimacy with God, a joy that is fired in the furnace of worship. After all, God is seeking worshipers, the surprise is that in this place of worship our quest for joy is finally realized, because in His presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand are pleasures evermore.

THERE IS A FOUNTAIN

John 4:13 Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, John 4:14 But whoever drinks the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Humans have a huge thirst for pleasure. It is often misguided but the thirst is very real. The Bible says we were created in the image of God. Our God knows about pleasure (He created it) and He has an infinite thirst for pleasure. Now this is where the problem starts. The Lord’s thirst is a holy thirst. He enjoys purity and holiness that flow from wholesome relationships and pursuits. Even though man was once like that, we were created that way, our thirst for pleasure has been tainted. Our capacity for pleasure is still God sized, it's just that our vision has been blurred and our heart has been corrupted. We now try to drink from the cup of lust and immorality or medicate ourselves with alcohol or drugs. Still the God sized thirst remains, nothing of this created world can ever fill our insatiable thirst. Here is how Jonathan Edwards explains it.

“They that have found Christ have a fountain that is exceeding full, full of that which they stand in need of for the supply of the wants, and satisfying the cravings of their souls; a fountain of that happiness that is true happiness, that which is exquisitely sweet, a fountain of living waters from whence rivers are continually flowing. They that find him find rivers of waters in a dry place. Here they find an inexhaustible treasure. Here they find balm to heal the wounds of their souls, excellent food, “fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined”. Here they find that fruit that is sweet to the taste. Here they find gold tried in the fire. Here is white raiment to clothe them. Here are crowns of glory. Here they have enough, enough

to live upon as long as they live in this world, and to all eternity. Here is enough; they can desire no more. The fountain is inexhaustible and never can be diminished.”

There is a fountain filled with life that can quench the longings of our heart. This is the very heart of the gospel message and the ultimate reason Christ came. He came to give us life. Not the kind of life offered by riches, fame, or accomplishments; He came to give us the kind of life He has enjoyed with His Father from before time began. So if you're thirsty, come to His fountain and have a drink.

GOD TENDS TO OVERFLOW

Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst—not ever. The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life.” Jn.4:14-The Message

This is one of the classic stories in the ministry of Jesus. He is talking to a disillusioned Samaritan woman, a woman disillusioned with life because of a long series of disappointments. Like women from every generation, she thought her happiness in life was somehow connected to finding the right guy, her knight in shining armor would come and make all her dreams come true. She had been through five marriages and her current man was not her husband, she had been disillusioned for a very long time. When Jesus began to minister to her she immediately went into her religious defense syndrome, "this is the way we do it in Samaria", but it seems her religion had let her down along with all of the men from her past. Jesus' words were different from any words she had heard before, somehow these words were full of life, and, against her better judgement, she found herself listening to the words of this compelling stranger from Galilee. Instead of religion He was talking about satisfaction and joy and something He called Living Water, somehow she felt strangely attracted to this man. He told her she could drink from these Living Waters and they would overflow in her life. Jonathan Edwards often spoke of the overflowing nature of God, here is something He said about God's tendency to overflow.

"God is absolutely independent of us; that we have nothing of our own, no stock from whence we can give to God; and that no part of his happiness originates from man. From what has been said, it appears, that the pleasure God hath in those things which have been mentioned, is rather a pleasure in diffusing and communicating to, than in receiving from, the creature. Surely, it is no argument of indigence in God that he is inclined to communicate of his infinite fullness. It is no argument of the emptiness or deficiency of a fountain, that it is inclined to overflow."

I love that, God has a tendency to overflow. The heavens cannot contain Him, surely we cannot benefit Him or add to Him by anything we have to offer, He loves to help us by revealing His goodness to us, as we receive from Him then, and then only, is our life complete. The woman from Samaria found a different water at the fountain that day, she found the only man that could make a real difference in her life, you never know, maybe this is the day you will be captured by this overflowing nature of God.

SOUL NEVER CLOYED

John 4:14 But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

One of the amazing things about humans is their insatiable desire for pleasure. We can't seem to help ourselves, this is simply the way we were made. One of the tragedies we find in the Bible is how the pursuit of pleasure was entirely corrupted by the fall of man. This truth answers a lot of questions for me. This helped me come to grips with my child-like behavior in the pursuit of the foolish pleasures of the world. I knew my irresistible attraction to the party lifestyle was wrong and would ultimately destroy everything I valued, but I couldn't seem to stop. The pull of pleasure proved to be too big for me. I was not able to stop my reckless behavior until a greater joy stopped me in my tracks. Jonathan Edwards preached often on the sanctifying power of the pleasures of God, here is something he said about our deep rooted bent toward pleasure.

"The spiritual joys and delights that are to be had in Christ are satisfying in these senses. They are of such a nature that those that receive them desire no other kind of enjoyment; not that they won't desire more of the same, for 'tis the character of a godly man that he hungers and thirsts after righteousness. But they shall be satisfied with it as to kind; they never will desire any change. It is not so with temporal enjoyments. After a man has one enjoyment a little while, he can't be satisfied with it; he wants something new. But the soul is never cloyed or weary in perpetually giving up itself with all its powers to the enjoyment of spiritual joys in Christ so as to desire any change. It is satisfying, as there is enough in it to satisfy the soul as to degree, were but obstacles removed, and the enjoying faculty duly applied. There is room enough here for the soul to extend itself. Here is an infinite ocean of it. If men ben't satisfied here in degree of happiness, the cause is with themselves. 'Tis because they don't open their mouths wide enough. There is enough of that which is enjoyed, the glory and the love of God, did we but so apply our souls to it as to take our fill of it."

This helps us understand the unusual statement Jesus made. He said if we drink the water He has to give we will never thirst. He was saying we would never thirst for the water of this world again. One thirst has been quenched, another has been aroused. So there is a way out of the seemingly endless spiral of the pursuit of joy; the way out may not be what you expect. Instead of making a decision to abstain from joy the barriers have been removed. We now pursue joy in God with all our might.

I'LL HAVE ANOTHER DRINK

Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. John 4:14

I remember a service we had in our church back in the 1990's with Marilyn Hickey. She was comparing spiritual drinking to someone who actually had a drinking problem (alcoholic). She joked about how that person had created a lifestyle of drinking. There was a bottle stashed away under the mattress at home for those middle of the night emergencies. Of course there was a bottle under the seat in the car and one stashed in the drawer at the office. There was always a drink nearby, after all, that's how we live our lives. For those of us who have tasted the sweetness and power of the heavenly drink, we also have created a lifestyle of drinking. We drink in His presence all throughout the day, it's how we survive. Just as the drunk lives off of his bottle, how much more do we live off of this incredible beverage that flows freely from The Lord. Here is Spurgeon's take on the power and beauty of the spiritual drink.

"He who is a believer in Jesus finds enough in his Lord to satisfy him now, and to content him for evermore. The believer is not the man whose days are weary for want of comfort, and whose nights are long from absence of heart-cheering thought, for he finds in religion such a spring of joy, such a fountain of consolation, that he is content and happy. Put him in a dungeon and he will find good company; place him in a barren wilderness, he will eat the bread of heaven; drive him away from friendship, he will meet the friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Blast all his gourds, and he will find shadow beneath the Rock of Ages; sap the foundation of his earthly hopes, but his heart will still be fixed, trusting in the Lord. The heart is as insatiable as the grave till Jesus enters it, and then it is a cup full to overflowing. There is such a fulness in Christ that he alone is the believer's all. The true saint is so completely satisfied with the all-sufficiency of Jesus that he thirsts no more-except it be for deeper draughts of the living fountain. In that sweet manner, believer, shalt thou thirst; it shall not be a thirst of pain, but of loving desire; thou wilt find it a sweet thing to be panting after a fuller enjoyment of Jesus' love."

DISCUSSION

1. Have you tasted this new wine that is available to whoever is thirsty? This drink is satisfying yet at the same time awakens an insatiable thirst in our soul. Only Christ can satisfy this longing for more in our hearts. As we learn to live off of God and create a lifestyle of spiritual drinking we soon learn that the consequences are quite different from those of worldly drinking. Alcohol can cost you your job, your family, your health, and even cost you your soul. Spiritual drinking actually improves your work, family relationships, your health, and prepares you for the joy of the life to come?
2. Discuss ways we can get our spiritual drink on

PRIME THAT PUMP

John 4:14 "But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

I grew up playing golf at a golf course in central New Jersey called Bamm Hollow. I believe it was on the tee box of the third hole that I learned about priming a pump. There was a well for the golfers to drink from located there. The first time I was there I couldn't get any water to come out of the well. That's where I learned about priming the pump. You had to pour some water down into the pump to get the water started. Without priming the pump it would seem like a dried up well. With that being said, maybe your "well" is not dry after all, maybe your pump just needs to be primed. Here is a lesson about priming the spiritual pump from Charles Spurgeon.

"You could not have cheered him: but the Lord has done it; He is the God of all comfort. There is no balm in Gilead, but there is balm in God. There is no physician among the creatures, but the Creator is Jehovah-rophi. It is marvelous how one sweet word of God will make whole songs for Christians. One word of God is like a piece of gold, and the Christian is the gold beater, and can hammer that promise out for whole weeks. So, then, poor Christian, thou needest not sit down in despair. Go to the Comforter, and ask him to give thee consolation. Thou art a poor dry well. You have heard it said, that when a pump is dry, you must pour water down it first of all, and then you will get water, and so, Christian, when thou art dry, go to God, ask him to shed abroad his joy in thy heart, and then thy joy shall be full. Do not go to earthly acquaintances, for you will find them Job's comforters after all; but go first and foremost to thy God, that comforteth those that are cast down, and you will soon say, In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul."

How long has it been since you have had a cool drink from your spiritual well? If the water is not flowing maybe your pump just needs to be primed. How is this done? One way is to encourage yourself in The Lord through scripture meditation. Search the scriptures, find one that is speaking to you, then ponder it until the sweet water begins to flow. Another way is to spend extra time in worship. Worship The Lord from your heart and the sweet water from the inner well will begin to flow. If all else fails, there is the faithful heavenly language. Pray and worship in the Spirit, before long that sweet Living Water will be bubbling up from that inner stream in your belly. Go ahead, PRIME THAT PUMP!!!

THE SPIRIT AND WORSHIP

John 4:23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

John 4:24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Worship is more than singing songs about God. Worship is spiritual by nature. No one can truly worship God until they are born again. As Jonathan Edwards used to say, “they may be able to howl but they can’t sing”. Worship is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The Spirit of God convicts us of our sin, awakens us to the reality and majesty of Christ, and He magnifies the Lord in our eyes and in our hearts. What is the result? Worship! An awakened heart has no other options, part of the package is making melody with our hearts to the Lord. John Piper spoke powerfully about worship in his book “Desiring God”. Here is a clip from his chapter on worship.

“The fuel of worship is the truth of God; the furnace of worship is the spirit of man; and the heat of worship is the vital affections of reverence, contrition, trust, gratitude, and joy. But there is something missing from this picture. There is furnace, fuel, and heat, but no fire. The fuel of truth in the furnace of our spirit does not automatically produce the heat of worship. There must be ignition and fire. This is the Holy Spirit...In other words, until the Holy Spirit quickens our spirit with the flame of life, our spirit is so dead and unresponsive it does not even qualify as spirit. Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. So when Jesus says that true worshipers worship the Father “in spirit,” He must mean that true worship comes only from spirits made alive and sensitive by the quickening of the Spirit of God.”

The worldly man sings songs about what he knows; love that went wrong, love that went right, or whatever vice he is dealing with at the moment. If he sings a spiritual song there is no life in it because it comes from his soul, not from his spirit which is energized by the Holy Spirit. To an awakened saint the difference is obvious. When the Lord is not present in a song it has no

life. God is still seeking worshippers. He is seeking them by His Spirit. When He finds one, that person is awakened and empowered to glorify God with their voice.

LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

-Excerpt from The Unseen World of the Holy Spirit. This passage of Scripture describes the greatest commandment and responsibility contained in the scriptures. It also contains the greatest blessing for Christians. When we begin to actively and passionately love the Lord, we are launched into another realm of freedom and liberty. Most Christians are bound with rules, programs, and rituals. These rituals come in Protestant and Catholic forms. They come in Evangelical and Pentecostal forms. Only when we learn to love the Lord with our spirit, soul, and our strength can we step out of religious bondage into the glorious liberty of Christ. First, we must love the Lord with our heart and our spirit. Man is created in the image of God. We are not animals but spirit beings. Because we are spirits, we can fellowship with God who is also spirit. This is what Jesus meant when He said, “God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). This present revival is causing people to become aware of the spiritual realm. We are becoming aware of the angels, who are spirit beings, but most of all we are becoming aware of the awesome Holy Spirit. He is pouring Himself out on the earth, and we are learning how to tap into His presence. So what does it mean to love the Lord with all of my heart? It means pursuing His presence and worshiping Him with other tongues and with my understanding. It means opening my heart up to this new intimacy. It means pursuing fellowship with the Father of Spirits, the wonderful Holy Spirit.

God also said that we must love Him with all of our soul. Our soul is our intellect, our will, and our emotions. The Body of Christ has had great teaching on renewing our minds and yielding our wills to the Lord. We have stressed those areas of the soul for many years. But the realms of the emotions have gone almost totally unexplored. In revival, people are discovering that we are emotional beings, that the Lord created us to laugh and to cry. It is OK to love the Lord with all of our soul, including our emotions.

The Lord also instructs us to love Him with all of our strength. He wants us to get involved physically. You can love Him by raising your hands, clapping, shouting, dancing, or running in His presence. I am learning to be more physical in my love for the Lord. During many songs, I will lie on the floor as I begin to worship the Lord. Initially I feel nothing, but before long I am lost in the realm of God’s presence. Recently in one of our services, many of us began to prostrate ourselves before the Lord. As we loved on Him and expressed our humility before Him, His glory came down like a heavy blanket in the building. When the anointing began to lift,

we realized that one and a half hours had passed. I remember being shocked, thinking I had been on the floor for only about 30 minutes. Time does not exist in His wonderful presence.

WATER INTO WINE

John 4:46 So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine.

The Lord recently spoke a powerful word to my wife Parris about the miracle in Cana, you know, the one where He turned the water into wine. I want to share a few observations about that story that minister powerfully to me.

1. First, it is obviously no coincidence that the first miracle was at a wedding. Obviously, this is a prophetic glimpse into the whole reason Jesus came. He came to redeem fallen sons and daughters, He came to gather a people for Himself. The culmination of His work will be seen at a wedding. It will be the wedding celebration of Christ and His bride, the body of Christ. Each one of His sons and daughters will see Him and celebrate with Him at this coming wedding reception.

2. Secondly, this wine is a picture of joy. The joy that Jesus brings to His people is not a natural joy based on the circumstances of life, it is a supernatural joy pictured by this incredible miracle. Most Christians have no concept of supernatural joy. They may understand salvation is a gift given to us by grace through faith, they may truly have a hope of eternal life that began when Christ came into their lives. But for many, there is just a drudgery in their religious observations. Any joy that they receive comes from the natural activities rather than tasting of God's supernatural joy available to us in Christ. James Boyce, a Presbyterian pastor, spoke powerfully about the nature of joy in our Christian experience.

"Apart from Him who is the source of life, Who is Himself the life, religion is a cold and lifeless thing. Apart from the joy He brings, religion is joyless and hardens personalities. Do you have religion? It will profit you nothing! Or do you have Christ? He alone can quench the hunger and thirst of your heart. He alone can put a song in your mouth that not even the angels can sing. He alone can give you true and everlasting joy".

3. Finally, the huge provision of wine speaks to us powerfully about the sufficiency of Christ. The amount of wine He supplied was between 120 and 180 gallons. That is outrageous. These Jewish feasts would last for a week and the whole town would be there. The provision of The Lord is sometimes quite shocking. What kind of situation do you find yourself in today? Are you facing problems bigger than you? Maybe your joy went out the door or maybe joy is something you've been unfamiliar with for a very long time. There is no problem too big, no

sickness too severe, no relationship so strained that Christ cannot satisfy. He will not only solve the apparent problem, but when you call on Him, more than just an answer to your circumstances will come, He will come Himself. Oh, I almost forgot, He always brings the new wine of supernatural joy with Him.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the three points on “the miracle at the wedding of Cana”

LESSON FIVE

“JESUS THE GREAT PHYSICIAN”

VICTORY’S POOL

John 5:1-3 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate, a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.

Several years ago I met a minister who was visiting New Orleans, for lunch. We had a very normal lunch and really never delved much into the nature of what God was doing at our church. As we finished, this minister asked to pray for me and gave me a word for our church that he felt impressed to share with me. The gist of the message was that The Lord had given Victory Fellowship a very special, and yes, unusual mantle. He said it was like the Pool of Bethesda in the book of John, the place where there were healing waters for the blind, the lame, and the paralyzed. This word was a powerful word of confirmation for me. You know it is not easy to go against the stream and trends of modern Christianity. This was a confirming word of God's unique work at Victory Church.

In John's account of the man who had been bed ridden for thirty eight years, there is some powerful truth for us today. The scripture says that the blind, the lame and the paralyzed, were waiting there for their miracle. I see three different kinds of issues portrayed in this passage that may apply to some of us today. Of course these folks had real physical sicknesses but they also speak to us about other emotional conditions common today.

First, there were the blind. This speaks to us of those who have no spiritual perception. Without Christ, we are all blind, unable to perceive the reality of The Lord in our lives. One touch of the Master's hand and all of that changes. Instead of groping around in the darkness of our own understanding, we stand in the light of His glorious truth.

Secondly, there was the lame. Maybe you feel spiritually lame today. You believe the Bible but you can't seem to translate that into your day to day behavior. I call that spiritual

lameness. Today, if you hear His voice, you can rise up and walk, no longer lame, but able to walk in the power of His love.

Finally there were the paralyzed. This speaks of those who have been traumatized by past experiences or by the trials that they are currently facing. Having devastating, heartbreaking, things happen in our lives can cause us to become like paralytics. We have been hit hard, maybe by a divorce, a sickness, or some catastrophic financial situation. Fear has gripped your heart, you have become paralyzed with fear. Today, Jesus is passing your way. If you are blind, the light of His glory is shining in to your heart. If you are lame, His hand of strength is embracing yours, He is calling for you to rise and walk. Paralyzed? The fear is being driven from your heart. You are being set free from your past, you can begin to live again.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the three points on the lame man that Ps. Frank describes.

POOL OF BETHESDA

John 5:2,3 – Inside the city near the Sheep Gate there is a pool called in Aramaic, The House of Loving Kindness....Hundreds of sick people were lying there on the porches—the paralyzed, the blind, and the crippled, all of them waiting for their healing.

This story of the miracle pool of water called Bethesda has been special to me and our church since the first days of revival. It was as if angels descended into our services that August twenty four years ago and began to do unusual miracles. I have heard Bethesda translated as the House of Mercy and the Place of Outpouring. To me it has to be both. We have experienced twenty four years of mercy and outpouring in our church. I actually think the angels have found a home at Victory Church. Th Passion Notes bring out some interesting information about this special place. Check it out.

“Archaeologists have discovered a deep double pool near St. Anne’s Church in Jerusalem surrounded by five porticoes located near the Sheep Gate, confirming the validity of the biblical account. The Sheep Gate is where the sacrificial animals were brought into the temple. This points us to the Lamb of God whose cross and sacrifice brought us healing. There is a pool of mercy near the Sheep Gate.”

It's not a coincidence that this pool was associated with the sheep. Some say this is where they sheep were washed in preparation to be offered in the temple as a sacrifice. It is in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God that we find our healing. Our healing is totally dependent on Christ. He is the One who helps us into the healing waters. Here again are comments from the Passion Notes.

“Under the shelter of religion, there are the sick and lame and blind who can't be healed unless they do the work and step into the pool. They are helpless and hopeless so near the Sheep Gate. But Jesus has none of the law's requirements to put upon us for our healing, only to believe in one who is greater than angels. The man had been sick for thirty-eight years, the exact length of time Israel had wandered in the wilderness.”

So what are you waiting for? Come on, in the water's fine. Let Jesus take you by the hand into the waters of His presence.

DISCUSSION

1. What is the importance of the water? Who else in the Old Testament didn't want to dip in the water? How long has it been since you really have had a good Holy Ghost dip!

“WHEN ANGELS MOVE THE WATER!”

Last Wednesday ended up being a day when God steps on the boat, or better yet jumps in the pool. Every week I try to go pick up the Marysong girls and get them outside and moving. Being in a house all cooped up doesn't sound like much fun so I try to get them out enjoying God's creation and spend some time getting to know them. Lately we have been able to swim in our little pool and spend time sharing. But last week as we were all getting into the pool, one of the newer girls seemed to just blurt out "I am so thankful that God put me here at Marysong, (she was crying) my life is changing, I find myself no longer angry." Then another girl who had just learned to swim a few weeks before chimed in and said how God has touched her in the Sunday services telling her she no longer needed the cane after three years of depending on it. By now all the girls were pretty much all in the pool and we were all bobbing up and down laughing and telling God stories. I don't want to forget to add a sister from the church who just found out she had a recurrence of cancer who also was in the pool. As I looked at all the girls, I began to feel the compassion of God surrounding us. In front of me were all kinds of diseases, many of them life threatening and it all seemed to crowd around me making me feel overwhelmed. When all of a sudden my overwhelmedness (I know this is not a word) turned into a vision of the pool of

Bethesda. God loves to show up in the broken places and I knew He was there in the midst of the fear, disease and regret from past mistakes. I begin to share to all those in the pool to reach out to Christ because He is with us. As we prayed together in that pool, each one began to share that they felt the presence of The Lord.

"To this natural hospital Jesus wended His way on the Sabbath of the feast. As the trained eye of the surgeon quickly selects the worst case in the waiting room, as is the eye of Jesus speedily fixed on "a man which had a spirit of infirmity for thirty and eight years, a man paralyzed apparently in mind as in body. Christ comes to us and begins to trouble the water. He bids us to leave the world of men and all their solutions. Jump in with unreserved faith and let Him heal you-it's time to pick up your bed and walk." -Interpreters Bible

If you are walking through those troubled waters of life, step into His troubled water, before you know it you will be singing with those angels.

STEP ON IN

I love to see the collision of the natural world and the spiritual world. That's what we see at the Pool of Bethesda. As rumor had it, sporadically an angel would stir the waters by the sheep gate and the first sick person who stepped in after this stirring would be healed. As a result, there was always a crowd of miserable people camped out by the pool. So in order to receive a miracle this way, you had to believe it (or you wouldn't be there in the first place) and you had to be first in when the waters began to swirl. I'm sure there were many people in those days who didn't believe in the angel water. Just like today, something is going on at that place on Airline Highway in New Orleans, but many wouldn't dare to be seen in those swirling Pentecostal waters. Nevertheless, the spiritual world is still invading and colliding with the natural world. Only those who believe it, wait on the Lord, and step on in, and are able to receive their miracle. Here is how Matthew Henry described the Pool of Bethesda.

"A miraculous limitation of the virtue as to the persons cured: He that first stepped in had the benefit; that is, he or they that stepped in immediately were cured, not those that lingered and came in afterwards. This teaches us to observe and improve our opportunities, and to look about us, that we slip not a season which may never return. The angel stirred the waters, but left the diseased to themselves to get in. God has put virtue into the scriptures and ordinances, for he would have healed us; but, if we do not make a due improvement of them, it is our own fault, we would not be healed."

Today, the Spirit of God is being poured out continually, we don't have to wait on an angel. Jesus is standing by the pool, the gathering of His believers, asking the age old question, "Do you want to be made whole?" If so, just step on in and leave the rest to the Lord.

DISCUSSION

1. Why Jesus had to ask the question "do you want to be made whole"!

DO YOU WANT TO BE HEALED

John 5:5-8 - Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

Do you want to be healed? At first glance that may sound like a strange question; but is it? Sometimes we tend to hide behind our weaknesses and even our sicknesses. It can be easier to be a victim than it is to be whole. After all, it's not my fault that I am this way and if someone else is responsible for my situation it may be easier to stay broken. If I am made whole I will have to start taking responsibility for my decisions and my actions. That's why this lame man laid the blame for his condition on someone else; every time the water is stirred up someone else gets in first. I don't have anyone to help me. That's why Jesus made the lame man face the real issue; do you want to be made whole. Here are some thoughts from the Pulpit Commentary on today's passage.

"The questioning of Jesus on this occasion involved an offer of mercy. "Dost thou veritably wish for health and strength?" The question implies a doubt. The man may have gotten so accustomed to his life of indolence and mendicancy as to regard deliverance from his apparent wretchedness, with all consequent responsibilities of work and energy and self-dependence, as a doubtful blessing. He whined out, with professional drawl, his oft-told story, reflecting very much upon his lovelessness and quarrelsomeness, and ugly temper. There are many who are not anxious for salvation, with all the demands it makes upon the life, with its summons to self-sacrifice and the repression of self-indulgence. There are many religious impostors who prefer tearing open their spiritual wounds to the first passerby, and hugging their grievance, to being made into robust men upon whom the burden of responsibility will immediately fall. In this case the sign of his palsied nature was written upon his face, and was probably known to every passerby."

Maybe it is not a physical problem that is stopping you, it could be anything. The Lord calls us out of the shadowland of excuses into the light of change. Do you want to be whole? Do you want your ministry to be whole? How about your family? Pick up your pallet and walk; your world is about to change.

ANGEL WATER

Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. John 5:8

I love the story of the pool of Bethesda, multitudes just waiting by the pool for a miracle. Suddenly, the miracle worker Himself came walking up to the pool. "Do you want to get well?" "What kind of question is that?", the lame man must have said to himself. Of course he wanted to get well, why else would he be lying by that pool. But did he really want to get well? Many of us like our excuses. They give us a safe place to hide. If we were made whole then we would seem vulnerable. We wouldn't be able to hide behind some excuse to avoid our fear of living a spiritual life. It's much safer to stay "lame". Then came the direct word, "If you want to get well, rise, pick up your pallet and walk". That's what the lame man did and that's exactly when he received his miracle. He was made whole. Charles Spurgeon spoke about the power of faith in God's word from this passage. Check it out.

"Like many others, the impotent man had been waiting for a wonderfully to be wrought, and a sign to be given. Wearily did he watch the pool, but no angel came, or came not for him; yet, thinking it to be his only chance, he waited still, and knew not that there was One near him whose word could heal him in a moment. Many are in the same plight: they are waiting for some singular emotion, remarkable impression, or celestial vision; they wait in vain and watch for nought. Meanwhile these poor souls forget the present Saviour, who bids them look unto him and be saved. He could heal them at once, but they prefer to wait for an angel and a wonder. To trust him is the sure way to every blessing, and he is worthy of the most implicit confidence; but unbelief makes them prefer the cold porches of Bethesda to the warm bosom of his love. O that the Lord may turn his eye upon the multitudes who are in this case today; may he forgive the slights which they put upon his divine power, and call them by that sweet constraining voice, to rise from the bed of despair..."

Just as Jesus walked up to the man by the pool long, long ago; today He has walked up to you. Actually, He has walked up to all of us. "How is that possible?" you ask. It 's really quite

simple. Jesus lives and works today by the power of His word. All it takes is for someone to take God's word for himself.

DISCUSSION

1. What are you suffering with today? Are you just a lame man (or woman) waiting for your luck to change? Actually, you're in luck. Your luck has changed. The Lord is standing here right now. He is speaking through this devotion. "Do you want to get well? It's time to pick up your life and walk.

HOW LONG?

Jn. 5:5,6 – Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to be made well?”

How much longer do I have to wait? The man in this story had been paralyzed for thirty eight years and possibly had been born that way. The amazing thing about this story is that he was there, hoping against hope that he would somehow get his miracle at the pool of Bethesda. Something else that grabs my attention is why the Lord chose this particular man to perform a miracle. Apparently it wasn't his great faith (after all he was full of excuses). Maybe it was because his case seemed the most hopeless. Shriveled up for thirty eight years? He could never be expected to have a normal life. This miracle was about God's glory. No man could fix this, that is no man but Jesus. Here is how Bullinger describes this miracle.

“For the Lord did not randomly choose a person from the crowd to heal, but he chose someone who, of all the people, was the most miserable, one who was gripped with long-term, dangerous, indeed, incurable disease, and a man who was especially longing for the help of others. He was so feeble that he could make no one listen to his requests for help to be carried down into the water. And this is related to us for our instruction. For the number of years of the sickness is recorded so carefully, so that those who are suffering through a long-standing illness should not despair. Rather, let them learn patience and await God's help which will come at the right time. Certainly, this man did not curse, did not murmur, and he did not prescribe any time for God to act. For he knew that when his deliverer showed up, he would bring help at the right time. The long duration of the sickness also enlarges the greatness of the miracle.”

So maybe your moment in time is approaching. Maybe you have been waiting a long, long time for your miracle. Abraham waited one hundred years for his miracle son, Isaac, to be born. Moses was exiled for forty years and wandered another forty in the wilderness. Even the Apostle Paul was put on hold for fourteen years waiting for his prophetic word to come about. How long do we wait? Apparently the long duration of the problem makes the miracle so much sweeter. Step into the Angel water, you are about to be made whole.

DISCUSSION

1. What happens to our expectation in prayer when things take time?
2. The Long duration of the problem makes the miracle so much sweeter! Do you agree and are you still believing for your miracle!

“He that was healed wist not who it was.” John 5:13. When I first accepted Christ, I had no idea of the magnitude of the change that had begun in me. No one ever does. What started out as a prayer to be forgiven opened up another world that I didn't know even existed. Christ Himself, the Creator of all things, had stepped into my life. It would be impossible to ever return to that "normal" life again. That's how it was with the man at the pool of Bethesda. What started out as a wish and a prayer, turned into something quite different. That day the lame man was healed of his physical malady but something much greater began in his heart. Christ had unlocked that hidden, unseen world to him, an unexpected change had begun. Charles Spurgeon describes this man's plight in his comments on today's verse.

"Years are short to the happy and healthy; but thirty-eight years of disease must have dragged a very weary length along the life of the poor impotent man. When Jesus, therefore, healed him by a word, while he lay at the pool of Bethesda, he was delightfully sensible of a change. Even so the sinner who has for weeks and months been paralyzed with despair, and has wearily sighed for salvation, is very conscious of the change when the Lord Jesus speaks the word of power, and gives joy and peace in believing. The evil removed is too great to be removed without our discerning it; the life imparted is too remarkable to be possessed and remain inoperative; and the change wrought is too marvelous not to be perceived. Yet the poor man was ignorant of the author of his cure; he knew not the sacredness of his person, the offices which he sustained, or the errand which brought him among men. Much ignorance of Jesus may remain in hearts which yet feels the power of his blood. We must not hastily condemn men for lack of knowledge; but where we can see the faith which saves the soul, we must believe that salvation has been bestowed. The Holy Spirit makes men penitents long before he makes them divines; and he who believes what he knows, shall soon know more clearly what he believes. Ignorance is, however, an evil; for this poor man was much tantalized by the Pharisees, and was

quite unable to cope with them. It is good to be able to answer gainsayers; but we cannot do so if we know not the Lord Jesus clearly and with understanding. The cure of his ignorance, however, soon followed the cure of his infirmity, for he was visited by the Lord in the temple; and after that gracious manifestation, he was found testifying that it was Jesus who had made him whole. Lord, if thou hast saved me, show me thyself, that I may declare thee to the sons of men."

His solution was greater than our need. The light had come, our long night was over. Maybe you haven't yet realized just how great this Christ is. His love is greater than your hurt, His grace is bigger than your sin, His power is bigger than your need. Maybe you also had no idea how far sin had taken you, that's okay, His mercy is more than enough for you.

DISCUSSION

1. Do you ever contemplate the goodness of God and how he saved you? Do you know who he is and given him all the glory!

BEFORE YOU CALL

John 5:5,6 – Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to be made well?”

This poor paralyzed man was really without hope. He had been in his incurable condition for many years and he was finally giving in to the likelihood of being in this state for the rest of his life. He didn't know Jesus and didn't ask for his healing even though His only hope of healing was there. Jesus pulled the request out of him, “Do you want to be made whole?”. Of course he did, what kind of question is that anyway. Actually its the question Jesus asks quite often. He may be asking it again right now, “Do you want to be made whole?”. Even today, if you are honest, do you really want to be healed or delivered from this pandemic? It gives everyone an excuse to do nothing for yourself and an opportunity to blame others for your circumstances. “Someone is always in my way and no one will help me into the water”. Here is how Brenz describes it.

“As Christ comes to help before the sick man had made any request . . . so by his immense mercy he anticipates the prayers of all those laboring out of faith, acting before he hears the prayers of the faithful. As he himself testifies in Isaiah 65[:24], “And it shall come to

pass that before they call, I will hear; as they are yet speaking, I will hear.” Christ asks, first, to invite him to make a petition; second, to teach secretly that he is the one who, when called on, is able to help. Thus, in all our afflictions the Lord asks us whether we want to be liberated when he places the longing for liberation in us. And by this longing we are secretly taught that there is nothing found in our natural powers whereby we might be liberated. But we must look elsewhere, to the hand of the Lord, from whom alone every liberation and redemption is to be hoped for in faith.”

DISCUSSION

1. So do you want to be whole? If so trust in the Lord, come out of your house and do something. You don't need any help except the help of the Lord.
2. What pallet are you wallowing in? How does our past affect our present?

RISE UP AND WALK

Jn.5:8 – Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.”

Only Jesus tells us to do things that we could never possibly do. This reminds me of the famous words of Augustine, “Lord, command what you will but give what you command”. This man could not possibly walk but he was commanded to try. This speaks volumes to us. How many lame and paralyzed among us lay dormant in our condition? Excuses keep us bound. Jesus speaks to all of us to do what we could never do. The truth is He meets us when we step out in faith. What is He saying to you? He may be calling you to preach His word, you have to take the first step. He may be asking you to pray for the sick, again we step out and He does the healing. He may be asking for you to begin to step out in faith in your giving. You sow the seed, He brings the increase. Here is how Matthew Henry describes it-

“He is bidden to rise and walk; a strange command to be given to an impotent man, that had been long disabled; but this divine word was to be the vehicle of a divine power; it was a command to the disease to be gone, to nature to be strong, but it is expressed as a command to him to bestir himself. He must rise and walk, that is, attempt to do it, and in the essay he should receive strength to do it. The conversion of a sinner is the cure of a chronic disease; this is ordinarily done by the word, a word of command: Arise, and walk; turn, and live; make ye a new heart; which no more supposes a power in us to do it, without the grace of God, distinguishing grace, than this supposed such a power in the impotent man. But, if he had not attempted to help himself, he had not been cured, and he must have borne the blame; yet it does not therefore

follow that, when he did rise and walk, it was by his own strength; no, it was by the power of Christ, and he must have all the glory.”

So don't just lay there making excuses like this paralyzed man did, “No one will help me get in the water and someone else always gets in first”. Just pick up your pallet and begin to act on God's word.

PRAYER TIME

Spend time dwelling on his greatness and his ability to heal you of your issues that you have carried around far too long! The Great Physician is present to heal!

LESSON SIX

JESUS IS THE BREAD OF LIFE

John 6:35 – Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; the one who comes to Me will not be hungry, and the one who believes in Me will never be thirsty.”

THE FAMILY OF TWO FISH

“One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, Here is a boy with five barley loaves and two small fish. But what difference will these make among so many?” John 6:8,9

John Wesley said; ”Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, to all the persons you can, in all the places you can, as long as ever you can.” As a kid growing up, real life can be just rough. Unless you are one of those kids that get it right the moment you were born. I would gather that most of us grew up in a family like the family of “Two Fish ”. You see the “Two fish” family go through life living average, “Two fish” families usually go unnoticed, not making an impact wherever they go. Guess you would say they could be “average Joe”. From their teachers, to the neighbors; to their co-workers; the Two fish family would be hard to pick out in a crowd. Everyday runs into another and their dreams fade out with each closing day.

But one day the family of “Two fish” heard about a “teacher” that was coming near their city. The family of two fish decided that having a picnic outside was better than staying inside so the mother Two fish packed (you guessed it) two fish and five barley loaves. This picnic took on something out of the ordinary as they listened to one of the greatest teachings they had ever heard. Everything about their lives began to change that day. After the message the strange man that had plenty to say asked Phillip to feed all the people around them. Philip and Andrew did the math and summed it all up. What Jesus was asking from them was just impossible. Lange's commentary said, “In the reckoning of men there is always a deficit; in the reckoning of Christ there is always a surplus.”

But we should never leave Jesus out of our calculations. The family of “Two fish” became for the first time in their lives, the ones who jumped into action! There was something about that day! The “Two fish” little boy stepped forward tugging on Andrew’s sleeve. The strange man on the mount that had so much to say warmed the “Two fish” little boy’s heart. He knew for the first time in his life that what he had was enough. The “Two fish” little boy gave his

two fish from his family of “Two fish”, and they were never the same. Christ took what they had and bought the multiplication that was needed. He fills with himself every hungry soul who eats.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the Family of Two fish

WHATEVER WE HAVE IS THE GIFT OF GOD!

“Put what you can into Christ’s hands constantly and the transforming and magnifying will multiply it. You have some thoughts, feelings, powers, capacities, actions, which you can now in a solemn way give to Jesus. Consecrate them. Do not say, “Oh, I have not got anything worth the giving; it is of no use at all.” Give Him the little, and he will make it much.”

(J. Vaughan, M. A.)

SITTING WITH JESUS

Jn.6:3 – And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.

Sometimes it's good to just sit down and be with the Lord. There seems to be undue pressure that we put on ourselves to perform when it comes to religious matters. Did I get my prayer time in, did I finish my daily readings, is my cell group growing and multiplying. Actually all of those things are good things but they can't be the driving force in our lives. Sometimes it's good to just sit down and be with Jesus. That was one of the amazing characteristics of the River outpouring in the 1990's. I found out it was okay to just lie on the floor in His presence and just enjoy the moment. The Lord actually likes being with us. After all we are His sons and daughters and will be in an amazing family relationship with Him in eternity. I love to take notice of seemingly insignificant phrases in the Bible. Today's verse is like that, Jesus went up on a mountain and there He sat with His disciples. Nothing could be better than that. Here is how the German reformer Musculus describes this phrase.

“And he sat there,” he says, “with his disciples.” Who with whom? The teacher with his students, the shepherd with his sheep, the hen with her chicks. Let us consider this gathering not of such a kind as physical eyes would have been able to see but of the sort of gathering that they were establishing: that paternal love in Christ and the souls of the disciples clinging to Christ no differently than chicks who run up to and cling to a mother hen. And let us not doubt that there will always be that same love for us if we are disciples of Christ, such that he sits and rests among us, feeding us by his Spirit, no differently than when he sat and rested among his disciples and fed them. And where did he sit with them? On a desert mountain. Meanwhile, the

scribes, Pharisees and priests were feasting in the crowded cities, especially in Jerusalem, while the Son of God sits with his disciples on a desert mountain.”

So maybe church is about more than doing or learning but maybe its about sitting down with Jesus and His disciples and just hanging out. It really doesn't get any better than that.

GODS TABLE

Jn.6:53-54 – So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day”.

I love the comparison Jesus made in this passage to communion and the Feeding of the Multitudes. Our Christian communion meal started with Jesus and His disciples at a Jewish Passover meal. For Him God's table was everywhere. In the church (synagogue), under the stars, in someone's home, or even a spontaneous breakfast on the beach. Everywhere is a good place to eat His body and drink His blood. Many times we miss the real because we have only experienced the symbolic in a church environment. All of that changes when Christ comes on the scene. Here is how Barclay describes this passage.

‘There is no doubt that John is saying that for the true Christian every meal has become a sacrament. It may well be that there were those who – if the phrase is allowed – were making too much of the sacrament within the Church, making a magic of it, implying that it was the only place where we might enter into the nearer presence of the risen Christ. It is true that the sacrament is a special appointment with God; but John held with all his heart that every meal in the humblest home, in the richest palace, beneath the canopy of the sky with only the grass for carpet, was a sacrament. He refused to limit the presence of Christ to an ecclesiastical environment and a correctly liturgical service. He said: ‘At any meal you can find again that bread which speaks of the humanity of the Master, that wine which speaks of the blood which is life.’

That day when the crowd sat down in the meadow and ate fish and bread with Jesus and His disciples, more than lunch was being served. That's what Jesus tried to say the next day in the synagogue, they were feasting on His body and His blood. Most that were there were only concerned with a meal that would fill their bellies, only those with eyes wide open had a clue of what was really going on. We can find the Lord's table anywhere, there is a place reserved for you.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss how the Lord makes a banqueting table all around for us!

MORE FOOD FOR THE SOUL

John 6:35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst".

Lets read Edwards on nourishment; "The grace of Christ Jesus, it nourishes the soul; it gives life and strength to it. Before the soul receives this grace, it is dead. In this it doth more than bread does to the body, that does but preserve the life of the body and revives it when weakened and languishing; but this heavenly food revives men when dead. And it also continues the life of the soul: the soul, after it is revived, would die again, were it not for the continuance of supply of grace and spiritual nourishment. It strengthens the soul as food does the body. The soul in its natural condition is a poor, feeble, languishing thing, having no strength; but the grace of Christ makes it strong and vigorous. And this spiritual nourishment makes the soul to grow, as food doth the body. The supplies of the Spirit of God increase the life and vigor of the soul, increases the understanding, increases holy inclinations and affections..."

Edwards describes how we are made alive by spiritual food, nourished and kept alive, strengthened by this food, and actually begin to have inclinations and affections for the Lord awakened by the bread from heaven. Why is this ? Because the very life of God pulsates in every word of God. Remember, Jesus Himself is the word of God. So go ahead and dig in, the table is spread and the meal is better than you can ever imagine.

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

Jn.6:48-51 – "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down out of heaven, so that anyone may eat from it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats from this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I will give for the life of the world also is My flesh."

This has to be one of the most radical things Jesus ever said. In the Jewish mind Jesus is making an absolute claim to deity. The Jewish leaders immediately were reminded of Moses' first encounter with the Lord in the burning bush. Moses asked "Who shall I say has sent me?" The Lord responded by telling Moses to say "I AM has sent me to you". Jesus was claiming to be the One in the bush. Jesus is the great I AM who had come to reveal Himself to all mankind.

He said that He was the bread of life. Only He could satisfy the hunger of man. Moses glimpsed Christ in the bush and was fed with manna (bread) from heaven for forty years. Now Christ was here in human flesh and claimed to be this bread from heaven. Here is how the Spirit Filled Life Bible describes this passage.

“This is the first of the seven I am sayings of Jesus, unique to John’s Gospel. There is an unmistakable parallel to God’s covenant name (Yahweh) by which He revealed Himself to Moses in Ex. 3:14, “I AM WHO I AM.” Jesus makes the pronouncement “I am the bread of life” three times (John 6:35, 48, 51). He is the “real” heavenly bread, the true life-sustaining power; anything else, regardless of its religious significance in past or present, is an inadequate substitute.”

Edwards put it this way; “This feast is an eternal feast. You’ve been invited to feast daintily for once, and then [return] to your old beggarly famished condition you were in before; but this royal provision is to be your perpetual entertainment. You may live upon such food forever and ever. You shall enter into the house of God, and you shall go no more out. You have been hungry and thirsty in times past, but if you come to this gospel feast you shall hunger nor thirst no more. Revelation 7:16, “They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more.” John 6:35, “He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believes on me shall never thirst.” At God’s right hand there are pleasures forevermore. There you may always eat and drink, and always be satisfied and yet never be gluttoned. You may eat and drink abundantly and never be in danger of excesses.”

Many think of this heavenly feast as a future event; that is unfortunate. This is our everyday feast that we can enjoy now regardless of the drama that surrounds us. Not only is heaven in front of us..... We are tasting it now in this life.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the heavenly feast presently in our lives!

TWELVE BASKETS

Jn.6:12,13 – So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.” Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

Everything about this story is amazing; the Lord’s concern for His followers, taking this opportunity to test His disciples, using a little boy for the miracle, and the endless types and

shadows of Christ seen in this miracle. This ending of the story is precious. He not only fed everyone until they were satisfied, there were leftovers for each disciple. They had more left over after they fed 5000 than they had before they started. He is more than enough and brings grace upon grace into everything He touches. Here are some comments from Spurgeon on this verse.

“This was that “blessing of the Lord” of which Solomon says that “it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.” If you get this blessing on your five loaves and two fishes, you may feed five thousand men with them, besides the women and the children. . . . Much more than they began with; for it is a law of the Heavenly Kingdom that he who gives to God shall be no loser; his five loaves and two fishes shall turn to twelve baskets full after thousands have eaten, and been satisfied. The more there is of complete consecration to Christ, and his blessed service, the more reward will there be in the world to come; and, possibly, even here.”

This miracle puts on display the blessing that comes upon those who give themselves and their resources to the work of God. I am sure the little boy never forgot the day that Jesus used his lunch to feed the crowds. The disciples never forgot the amazement as fish and bread actually multiplied in their hands. Here is a quote from the Passion Notes on this miracle.

“The miracle took place as the disciples distributed what they had. Each disciple ended up with a basket full of leftovers.”

If you become involved with God’s kingdom work you will not suffer lack. He funds His kingdom, He is just searching for vessels to work through. Give your lunch to him, give your hands to Him. Don’t be surprised when the leftovers are more than what you started with.

DISCUSSION

1. Why is it necessary to fund the kingdom?
2. Have you thought about how your resources are there for kingdom use?

SOUL DESIRES

Jn. 6:35 – Jesus said to them, “I am the Bread of Life. Come every day to me and you will never be hungry. Believe in me and you will never be thirsty.”

Food is a big deal. If you didn’t realize that before the Covid drama you certainly realize it now. As the saying goes, “You gotta eat”. The miracle that Jesus performed the day before this teaching was one of His greatest. He had fed 5000 families with a little boy’s lunch. This miracle brought up thoughts of the prophet Moses had prophesied about. Seeing this miracle of feeding

thousands caused them to think Jesus was apparently their new Moses. Boy, did they have that wrong. Jesus said that the bread in the wilderness came from His Father, not from Moses. And more than that, Jesus claimed to be the bread of God from heaven. The manna and the loaves and fish were just pointing to Him. Here is how Luther describes this scene.

“Out of the mass of powerful words in the holy Scripture there is almost no stronger word that Christ is a bread and meal given by God, and that whoever eats this bread lives forever and becomes content, no longer hungering or thirsting. . . . It is a settled point that here in this chapter the Lord is speaking about spiritual food, for he himself explains it as the hunger and thirst of the soul. The soul wants to live forever, to not be cursed, to have a merciful God, to be able to stand before the wrath and judgment of God, to not be condemned by sin and the law or go to hell. Those are the soul’s desires. It is a spiritual thirst and hunger, for which we need a spiritual meal and drink. And so the Holy Spirit comes and says, “If you do not want to die or be damned, then come to Christ, believe in him and cling to him. Eat this spiritual meal, believe in Christ, that is the most important thing.”

The bread and fish pointed to our greater need; we need the bread from heaven. Just having an abundant supply in this life will never satisfy us and certainly won’t prepare us for the other world. Jesus told them in plain words that day, “Unless you eat My body and drink My blood you have no life in you”. So go ahead and eat this heavenly manna, it is available for everyone. The only qualification is to be hungry for this different kind of bread.

DISCUSSION

- 1.How necessary is this manna in our everyday life.
- 2.Discuss Luther’s comment.

FEEDING ON CHRIST

Jn.6:53-58 – TPT – Jesus replied to them, “Listen to this eternal truth: Unless you eat the body of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have eternal life. Eternal life comes to the one who eats my body and drinks my blood, and I will raise him up in the last day. For my body is real food for your spirit and my blood is real drink. The one who eats my body and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. The Father of life sent me, and he is my life. In the same way, the one who feeds upon me, I will become his life. I am not like the bread your ancestors ate and later died. I am the living Bread that comes from heaven. Eat this Bread and you will live forever!”

Jesus taught us about living off of Him every day in this passage. The Lord compared Himself to the bread and fish and the manna that the children of Israel lived on for forty years. We are designed by God to live off of this heavenly food; nothing else will do for us. Here is how the Passion Notes describe this passage.

“To eat his flesh is to take into our life by faith all that Jesus did for us by giving his body for us. To drink his blood is to take by faith all that the blood of Jesus has purchased for us. This “eating” and “drinking” is receiving the life, power, and virtue of all that Jesus is to replace all that we were in Adam. Jesus’ blood and body is the Tree of Life, which is offered to everyone who follows him.”

Just as the Lord taught us to drink living water He is teaching us to feed off of Him for our contentment and spiritual nourishment. It is in feeding on Christ daily that we begin to enter into the joy of our Christian faith. What a great promise, if we eat this heavenly bread we will never be hungry or thirsty even in the difficulties of this life.

Discussion- How important is communion in our lives?

EYES OF FAITH

Jn. 6:7 – Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.”

This miracle is a great picture of our Christian faith. It deals with the very basic spiritual and natural needs that we have. It brings us to a place of total dependency on the Lord. Phillip is a picture of all of us. He could not see any way out of the situation they were in. They were too far from stores, they did not have enough money even if they could get to a store, and there were far too many people. Phillip’s problem was that he was strangled by unbelief. The creator of all things was right in front of him and he had no eyes to see. The funny thing about that is this, we too are standing in the very presence of the Lord and oftentimes all we can see is the lack rather than the supernatural supply of God. Here is how the reformer Johannes Brenz saw it.

“Philip reveals his unbelief. And with his statement he provides an example of the wisdom of the flesh. For our reason, endowed as it is with fleshy eyes, can look no further than to the present state of affairs and to matters of the flesh, to food and money. When these things have run out, it despairs, not knowing where to turn. But faith, because it has spiritual eyes, does not cling to visible things but looks to invisible things, to another world. For if it sees that nothing is at hand suitable for food in this world, it directs the sight of its eyes to another world, where it finds God promising all the best things, abounding in every good thing and kindly

directing to us all the things we need to live. What then? You will have enough if you have enough belief. Miserly and wicked people do not believe, and so they possess nothing, they have nothing. “The miser is as much in want of that which he has as of that which he does not have.”

Fleshly eyes can only see sickness, or lack, or some other barrier that will keep us from receiving God’s breakthrough provision in our life. Seeing Christ Himself as our provision is where our breakthrough begins. He is able to feed the multitudes with a little boy’s lunch, after all He created the bread and the fish to begin with.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss learning to have eyes that see!

PIECES

*Jn.6:12 – When they were filled, He *said to His disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.”*

The disciples and the crowd who ate the bread and the fish that day had seen amazing things. They had watched as multitudes had been healed by the touch of His hand. They sat for hours literally spellbound as they heard the teaching of the man who spoke like no other man. They witnessed the miracle of the multiplication of the little boy’s lunch. His disciples saw Him walk on water that night and literally calm a storm and transport a boat across the sea in an atomic second. I wonder if they thought about what He said that day, “Gather up the leftover fragments”. If truth were told, that is really all they had witnessed that day, little fragments of what is coming, His kingdom is greater and better than any of us can dare to believe. Here is how Maclaren describes these leftover pieces.

“Oh, dear friends! what you and I have ever had and felt of Christ’s power, sweetness, preciousness, and love is as nothing compared with the infinite depths of all those which lie in Him. The sea fills the little creeks along its shore, but it rolls in unfathomed depths, boundless to the horizon away out there in the mid-Atlantic. And all the present experience of all Christian people, of what Christ is, is like the experience of the first settlers in some great undiscovered continent; who timidly plant a little fringe of population round its edge and grow their scanty crops there, whilst the great prairies of miles and miles, with all their wealth and fertility, are lying untrodden and unknown in the heart of the untraversed continent. The most powerful telescope leaves nebulae unresolved, which, though they seem but a dim dust of light, are all ablaze with mighty suns. The ‘goodness’ which He has ‘wrought before the sons of men for them that fear’ Him is, as the Psalmist adoringly exclaims, wondrously ‘great,’ but still greater is that

which the same verse of the Psalm celebrates—the goodness which He has ‘laid up for them that fear Him.’”

The very next day Jesus told them, He clearly told them they had not understood the miracle of the bread and fish. He told them He was the true bread that comes down from heaven. He Himself is the treasure, not His miracles. So think about the things He has done for you and see them as fragments, fragments of the true bread that comes from heaven to satisfy our souls.

MIRACLE IN HIS HAND

Jesus therefore took the loaves. John 6:11

Here are some thoughts from Watchman Nee on today’s verse. “For most of His miracles, God makes use of material. Here Jesus accepts five loaves and two fishes. He might have turned stones to bread, but He did not. He chose instead to work with what was offered Him. “Bring them hither to me,” He said. What He does, He does through us. All miracles begin here, with my all in His hands. Keep my loaves to myself, and one man is fed. Give them up to Him, and shall I go hungry? In a day of extreme national poverty, the prophet Malachi brought to Israel God’s answer to her problem. It was: bring the whole tithe into the storehouse—and see! It takes only a tiny stopper to close a very large bottle, so withholding from us its entire contents. And heaven is like that. Often for us there is no miracle simply because we give God nothing to work on. He asks only a very little—what we have! But He needs that.”

So there you have it, the miracle has been in your hand (or in your pocket) all along. It doesn’t take much, it only takes trusting in the Lord. After all, He has you in His hand.

Here are some thoughts from Augustine on the miracle of the loaves and the fish. “For certainly the government of the whole world is a greater miracle than the satisfying of five thousand men with five loaves; and yet no man wonders at the former; but the latter men wonder at, not because it is greater, but because it is rare. For who even now feeds the whole world, but He who creates the cornfield from a few grains? He therefore created as God creates. For, whence He multiplies the produce of the fields from a few grains, from the same source He multiplied in His hands the five loaves. The power, indeed, was in the hands of Christ; but those five loaves were as seeds, not indeed committed to the earth, but multiplied by Him who made the earth. In this miracle, then, there is that brought near to the senses, whereby the mind should be roused to attention, there is exhibited to the eyes, whereon the understanding should be exercised, that we might admire the invisible God through His visible works...”

The people who ate the bread and the fish in the gospel story were astonished. To those who had eyes to see they were beholding the glory of the Lord in the miracles of Jesus.

NOT JUST FISH AND BREAD

JOHN 6:12,13 – When they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.” So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

The miracles of Jesus always display aspects of the glory of God. What started as a little boy’s meager lunch turned into a full on banquet. There were 5000 hungry men plus women and children. The best estimate of the size of the whole crowd was 15-20 thousand hungry bellies. How far would 5 loaves and 2 fish go? Apparently much further than anyone imagined. Not only did everyone eat until they were satisfied, there were 12 baskets of leftover fish and bread. Here is how the Lutheran theologian from the 1500’s, Hunnius, describes this miracle.

“Now all of them don’t just eat, but even greater than this, they all are completely satisfied. And not only are they satisfied, but- and this is even more astonishing- there is still some left over. And there are not a small amount of leftovers, but – this goes beyond the comprehension of human intelligence, – there is more left over than was first placed before the crowd. Just before the beginning of the banquet there had been at hand only fives loaves of bread and two fish, which could hardly even fill one basket. Now, afterwards, when so many thousands of human beings had been filled, the leftover pieces are gathered at the Lord’s command, and twelve baskets are filled. A careful consideration of all these circumstances magnifies the glory of this miracle to a considerable degree.”

The glory of God is what this miracle is all about, it's what His miracles are always about. The glory of God shines the brightest when it is darkest. Think about it, 20,000 people wondering where their next meal would come from. In the next moment, they were sitting in groups eating bread and fish to their heart’s desire. Not only did everyone have a full belly, there were actually 12 baskets of bread and fish leftover. As Hunnius pointed out, there was more bread and fish leftover than what they started with. When there is no shot, when circumstances are more than hard, when success is impossible; that is when God’s glory shines the brightest.

MANNA

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

We were made to live off of God. This is the lesson of communion, God is the very food for our souls. What is really troubling is what we try to fill the hunger of our souls with. It often proves to be nothing that really satisfies. Recently there have been many reports of the suicidal epidemic related to opioid use. There are people from every social group, ethnic group, and age group that are falling prey to drug abuse and actually thousands who have died as a result of overdosing. What would cause someone to resort to such drastic measures? Actually the answer is spiritual; we were made to live off of God. When we look to other things as the source of life and pleasure the results become catastrophic. Man has a basic need for God in his soul, that is the way we were made. Our capacity for happiness is God sized and nothing else can fill that God sized hole. Here is how Jonathan Edwards describes our need for spiritual food.

“This excellency of Jesus Christ is the suitable food of the rational soul. The soul that comes to Christ, feeds upon this, and lives upon it; it is that bread which came down from heaven, of which he that eats shall not die; it is angels’ food, it is that wine and milk that is given without money, and without price. This is that fatness in which the believing soul delights itself; here the longing soul may be satisfied, and the hungry soul may be filled with goodness. The delight and contentment that is to be found here, passeth understanding, and is unspeakable and full of glory. It is impossible for those who have tasted of this fountain, and know the sweetness of it, ever to forsake it. The soul has found the river of water of life, and it desires no other drink; it has found the tree of life, and it desires no other fruit.”

It’s funny that no matter how much man advances his basic need is still the same. We need the Lord. He is our food and our drink. In Him alone we find life and in Him alone will we find peace for our souls.

SUITABLE FOOD

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

We were made to live off of God. This is the lesson of communion, God is the very sustenance of our lives. What is really troubling is what we try to satisfy the hunger of our souls with, for most it is anything but the Lord. Recently there have been many reports of the suicidal epidemic related to opioid use. There are people from every social group, ethnic group, and age

group that are falling prey to drug abuse and actually thousands who have died as a result of overdosing. What would cause someone to resort to such drastic measures? Actually the answer is spiritual; we were made to live off of God. When we look to other things as the source of life and pleasure the results become catastrophic. Man has a basic need for God in his soul, that is the way we were made. Our capacity for happiness is God sized and nothing else can fill that God sized hole. Here is how Jonathan Edwards describes our need for spiritual food.

“This excellency of Jesus Christ is the suitable food of the rational soul. The soul that comes to Christ, feeds upon this, and lives upon it; it is that bread which came down from heaven, of which he that eats shall not die; it is angels’ food, it is that wine and milk that is given without money, and without price. This is that fatness in which the believing soul delights itself; here the longing soul may be satisfied, and the hungry soul may be filled with goodness. The delight and contentment that is to be found here, passeth understanding, and is unspeakable and full of glory. It is impossible for those who have tasted of this fountain, and know the sweetness of it, ever to forsake it. The soul has found the river of water of life, and it desires no other drink; it has found the tree of life, and it desires no other fruit.”

It’s funny that no matter how much man advances, his basic need is still the same. We need the Lord. He is our food and our drink. In Him alone we find life and in Him alone will we find peace for our souls.

“There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?” John 6:9

The Bible is full of so many unnoticed people that seem to pop in out of nowhere. Can you imagine being the woman that touched the hem of Christ’s garments, or the boy that was raised from the dead at Nain? Did they finish strong? I believe the touch of the Master’s hand changes us forever!

Have you ever been judged as insufficient? I have such a silly story about the time I tried out for the chorus at grade school. There I was, standing in front of the teacher trying to sing, “my country tis of thee” when her next words were——“NEXT!” Yes, in a lot of ways, that really summed up my life as a child, until Christ stepped in of course. Andrew saw this little boy and just shrugged him off with a comment of “what is this among so many?” Sometimes our candle appears to be snuffed out, but the Lord hadn’t finished with the biscuits and sardines! Yes there is another side of the story! There was a monk named Luther, who, while he was reading his Bible, suddenly stumbled onto the doctrine of justification by faith; yet when he went to a

dear brother in the Lord, and told him how he felt, his friend said to him, “Go back to thy cell, and pray and commune with God, and hold thy tongue.” You see he had a tongue that he could not hold, and that nobody else could hold, and he began to speak with it the truth that changed the world. Spurgeon said it right when he said, “The disproportion is enormous: if each one should have only the tiniest crumb, there would not be sufficient. But the Lord Jesus was equal to the emergency: none of the people went away without sharing in his bounty; they were all filled.”

Most of us really just have very little to give but when put into the Master’s hand in due time He will put into His service. That little boy could have backed away and kept the little he had all to himself and listened to the voice of reason that says, “you never could do anything——NEXT!” But I am here just to be a voice to your small little insufficient lunch you brought today—never despise the day of small beginnings!

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss why the miracle of the loaves and fishes is so important.

LESSON SEVEN

JOHN 7 “THE WATER OF LIFE”

John 7:37 – “Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.’”

I realized several days ago that it was actually the last day of the feast of Tabernacles. Of course, thinking about that made me remember this famous statement that Jesus made on “the last day of the feast”. He was observing the priests pour out the pitchers of water in the temple and hearing them sing from Isaiah about the joy of salvation. Apparently, He couldn’t contain Himself like Jeremiah who said the word was like fire shut up in his bones. Jesus began to cry out “If anyone is thirsty let Him come to Me and drink”. The symbolism of the gift He came to offer was simply overwhelming. Here is how Barclay describes this scene:

“Each day of the festival, the people came with their palms and their willows to the Temple; with them they formed a kind of screen or roof and marched round the great altar. At the same time, a priest took a golden pitcher which held about two pints – and went down to the Pool of Siloam and filled it with water. It was carried back through the Water Gate while the people recited Isaiah 12:3: ‘With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.’The water was carried up to the Temple altar and poured out as an offering to God. The whole dramatic ceremony was a vivid thanksgiving for God’s good gift of water and an acted prayer for rain, and a memory of the water which sprang from the rock when they travelled through the wilderness. On the last day, the ceremony was doubly impressive, for they marched seven times round the altar in memory of the sevenfold circuit round the walls of Jericho, whereby the walls fell down and the city was taken.”

Today we are living in the time of the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. It was also called Ingathering. We are in the days of the last harvest and the outpouring of the waters of joy. If you are thirsty you can come and drink, again and again, from the wells of salvation. These waters become like a fountain inside of us, sustaining us and overflowing in streams of ministry and blessing.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss how important is drinking as the end time draws near.

Jn. 7:37-39 Then on the most important day of the feast, the last day, Jesus stood and shouted out to the crowds—'All you thirsty ones, come to me! Come to me and drink! Believe in me so that rivers of living water will burst out from within you, flowing from your innermost being, just like the Scripture says!'

Jesus was prophesying about the Holy Spirit that believers were being prepared to receive. But the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out upon them, because Jesus had not yet been unveiled in his full splendor. Here are some comments from Brian Simmons on this passage:

“When man’s feasting is over there is still thirst. Jesus comes at the last day of the feast to satisfy the thirst of those who seek God. Only the Lord Jesus can quench the spiritual thirst of men by giving them his living water. This splendor (spoken of in this verse) included the splendor of the cross, the splendor of his resurrection, and the glory of his ascension into heaven. Just as water poured out of the rock that was struck by Moses, so from the wounded side of Jesus living water poured out to heal, save, and bring life to everyone who believes. The Holy Spirit poured out of Christ and into the church at Pentecost.”

THE RIVER REVIVAL

Recently I did a broadcast with Pastor Terrence and Pastor Chandler about revival. The question that was posed to me was how many outpourings had I been part of and what did I learn from each. I responded by talking about the Jesus Movement and the River Outpouring. Yesterday I shared about lessons from the Jesus Movement, today I will share lessons learned from the River outpouring.

As many of you who know me know that in 1994 I experienced a major touch from God that impacted my life, my ministry, and our church in many remarkable ways. The first thing that attracted me to this move of God was the unmistakable, and shocking sense of God’s presence in the services. Of course I had often felt the presence of God throughout my Christian experience, just not like this. It started for me at a Rodney Howard Browne service in Rockwall, Texas. I found myself overwhelmed day after day at the distinct, tangible, and heavy sense of the presence of God at each service. Many times I found myself stuck to the floor, soaking in His presence. Soaking was new to me. I learned that the heaviness of God could change everything in my life. Learning to wait on the Lord and literally soak in Him would change me and equip me for His work.

One of the phrases that was often used in the River outpouring was “drinking”. I remember thinking about this at the beginning and recognizing what drinking was. Jesus had said that if we drink the water He had to give we would never thirst. I concluded that drinking was just receiving or drinking in the Lord. I had been stuck in the doing or giving mode for so long that I had forgotten how to receive. Drinking in His living water became my very life. This outpouring convinced me of the supernatural nature of Christianity. We can no longer settle for just a system of belief or a creed, we need the very power of God in our lives. (To be continued)

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss how important it is to receive!

John. 7:37-39 Believe in me so that rivers of living water will burst out from within you, flowing from your innermost being, just like the Scripture says!”

There is a river that flows from the throne of God. Seated on this throne is the One John saw in the book of Revelations. He said that this One on the throne was both the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. This is what Jesus was prophesying about in today’s passage. He was speaking of the day when He would be glorified with His Father on the throne with the River of Life streaming out from Him. We live in that day. There is a River and it flows from the glorified Lord into and out of His church on earth.

John said Jesus was prophesying about the glory flooding from Christ after He took His place at the Father’s right hand. John saw this living water flow out from Christ when He was pierced on the cross. John 19:34 – “But one of the soldiers took a spear and pierced Jesus’ side, and blood and water gushed out”. There is still living water flowing out of the wounds of Jesus on us today. There is a River of life flowing out to the thirsty; whoever drinks from this river will never thirst again. This Living Water will heal our broken heart, restore our devastated lives, and heal our bodies. Look to Him now, there is a River that flows from the throne of God.

The unveiling of Christ began in His work from the cross to the throne. The Glory of God was poured out on whosoever will as a result of His death, resurrection, and glorification in heaven. This passage calls it God’s splendor. The magnificence of God was released through the humiliating death Jesus experienced on the cross. His humility released the glory of God. The creator was cloaked in the form of a man and was executed by the Roman soldiers to fulfill the redemptive plan of God. Christ died to save sinners, even those who nailed Him to the cross. This was the beginning of the release of God’s splendor. After three days in a tomb Jesus was raised from the dead. Man’s greatest enemy, death, was conquered. The glory of God was

displayed in God's resurrection power. Then there is the glorification of the man, Jesus of Nazareth. From the humility of His arrest, trial, and death on a cross to the astounding splendor of Christ being glorified on the throne. This humble carpenter from Nazareth in Galilee is now ruling all things by His word. One glimpse of His splendor and we find ourselves in His glorious river.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss how the cross relates to the river of God.

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink”.

The Lord was calling out that there was something more. He was begging His hearers to come drink from Him, drink living waters that will quench the thirst of your soul. This living water would not only quench your thirst, it would flow out to others. Here is how Charles Spurgeon describes it.

“Patience had her perfect work in the Lord Jesus, and until the last day of the feast he pleaded with the Jews, even as on this last day of the year he pleads with us, and waits to be gracious to us...Pity expressed herself most plainly, for Jesus cried, which implies not only the loudness of his voice, but the tenderness of his tones. He entreats us to be reconciled. We pray you, says the Apostle, as though God did beseech you by us. What earnest, pathetic terms are these! How deep must be the love which makes the Lord weep over sinners, and like a mother woo his children to his bosom! Surely at the call of such a cry our willing hearts will come.”

Here is how Augustine described drinking 1600 years ago. “The Lord, therefore, cries aloud to us to come and drink, if we thirst within; and He says that when we have drunk, rivers of living water shall flow from our belly. The belly of the inner man is the conscience of the heart. Having drunk that water then, the conscience being purged begins to live; and drinking in, it will have a fountain, will be itself a fountain. What is the fountain, and what the river that flows from the belly of the inner man? Benevolence, whereby a man will consult the interest of his neighbor. For if he imagines that what he drinks ought to be only for his own satisfying, there is no flowing of living water from his belly; but if he is quick to consult for the good of his neighbor, then he becomes not dry, because there is a flowing. We will now see what it is that they drink who believe in the Lord; because we surely are Christians, and if we believe, we drink. And it is every man's duty to know in himself whether or not he drinks, and whether he lives by what he drinks; for the fountain does not forsake us if we forsake not the fountain.”

We start with drinking, that's when all the action starts. Our lives become like a bubbling fountain flowing out like a river of this living water that is the source of our life. It flows out of us to the other thirsty ones in our world. So our thirst results in drinking, our drinking results in an overflowing fountain, this fountain flows out to quench the thirsty in our world. Is anybody thirsty? Come and drink and you too will become an overflowing fountain.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss why it is hard for some to drink.

DOUBLE BLESSED

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. Jn. 7:38

The promise given by the Lord about living water is one of the greatest promises in the Bible. First He said that if we would drink this living water we would never thirst. That in itself is really over the top. Jesus is describing utter and total satisfaction that only comes from the Lord. Nothing from His glorious creation could ever make that boast, total satisfaction. What is different about this living water? It is actually a reference to the Holy Spirit Who is not created at all, He is the glorious third person in the deity that makes the satisfying life of intimacy with God a reality. The second promise associated with living water is in today's verse. The living water would flow out of our innermost being, that place of intimate fellowship, to minister to others. This is the second blessing of living water. Here is Andrew Murray's description.

“Jesus said in his conversation with the Samaritan woman, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst”. In today's text the promise is even greater: Rivers of living water will flow from his heart, bringing life and blessing to others. John says that this refers to the Holy Spirit who, while Christ lived, had not yet been poured out. Christ first had to be sacrificed to God by the eternal Spirit and, by virtue of the resurrection, be declared by the Holy Spirit as the Son of God. Then only would the Son of God receive power from the Father to pour out the Holy Spirit, for the children of God to be able to declare, “The Holy Spirit of Christ lives in me.” What does one need to be able to experience the promise of the streams of living water? Only one thing: an intimate clinging to Christ—an undivided submission to Him and the assurance that His Spirit will do the work within you that you yourself cannot do. You need a faith which trusts Him from day to day to let the living water flow from you.”

That is a great description of our Christian life. We drink this water, we are satisfied, and it flows out to meet the needs of others all around us. So are you thirsty today? Go ahead and have a drink, soon streams of living water will be flowing out from you.

FOOLS, THIEVES AND A HARLOT

Expectancy starts with a spiritual hunger or thirst. It seems the Lord awakens our thirst for Him and His kingdom when He is preparing to do a new thing in the earth. You can only take so much apathy or spiritual lethargy until you have just had enough. I think we may be in one of those seasons right now.

So, let me ask you the question, are you experiencing a new spiritual thirst in your life? Do you feel an excitement about changes on the horizon and want to be a part of all of it? If you answered yes to those questions it is a good indication that the Lord is calling you into a whole new spiritual season in your life. After all, this living water is for anyone. Here are some powerful words from Charles Spurgeon as he talked about ending one year and beginning another.

“No waiting or preparation is so much as hinted at. Drinking represents a reception for which no fitness is required. A fool, a thief, a harlot can drink; and so sinfulness of character is no bar to the invitation to believe in Jesus. We want no golden cup, no bejewelled chalice, in which to convey the water to the thirsty; the mouth of poverty is welcome to stoop down and quaff the flowing flood. Blistered, leprous, filthy lips may touch the stream of divine love; they cannot pollute it, but shall themselves be purified. Jesus is the fount of hope.

I love the brutal honesty of Spurgeon, ‘a fool, a thief, or a harlot’ can drink this living water. Obviously our thirst results in drinking, drinking, results in renewal, and renewal ends up in ministry. There is a big world out there that has no idea what is available to them in our Christian faith. They think we are bigots, hypocrites, and pharisees; they have no idea we are really fools thieves and harlots that have been changed by God.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss who is able to come and drink.

God’s love is more than an emotion, way more. His love is actually a person. Yeah, you heard me right. God is love, not God has love. His love is so powerful it is actually one of the members of the Trinity. Just as Jesus is the embodiment or manifestation of the wisdom of God, the Holy Spirit is the love of God. This love is eternal. Even before creation the Father loved His

Son. This love between the Father and the Son is a person, the blessed Holy Spirit. When we are touched by the power of the Holy Spirit we are actually having an encounter with God's love. His love is amazing and will change everything in your life. William Seymour led the Pentecostal revival known as Azusa Street. Here are some of his thoughts about being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

“The baptism of the Holy Spirit is power, the understanding of His Word, and the glory of God on your life. Whenever the Lord wants to play His harp, He tunes it up and plays with His own fingers, speaking and singing in any language he wishes. The man who hears you speak a message right from the throne, falls down and seeks God and gets up to report that God is in you of a truth. The baptism of the Holy Spirit makes you more humble and fills you with divine love. Through Spirit baptism, the grace and fruit of the Spirit are manifest. When you get your baptism with the Holy Spirit, you will surely go up into the mountain with Christ. If you want to know what it is to praise God and have the joy of the Lord in your soul that flows like a mighty river, tarry and get your personal Pentecost. He keeps the rivers flowing in your soul that you may be fit for irrigation wherever you go.”

To be loved is one of our basic human needs. This need is finally met when we begin to experience the baptism of His love. Today can mark the beginning for you. Like Jesus said, “Wait until you are clothed with power from on high”.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss why Jesus is so adamant.
2. Talk about us drinking of Him.

The scene portrayed in today's verse is more radical than it appears at first glance. It was during the feast of Tabernacles, one of the most important Jewish feasts, when Jesus made this bold declaration. The priests were singing from Isaiah, “With joy we draw waters from the well of salvation”. If it was like most religious services, they were singing about joy but sadness and ritual ruled the day. Jesus stood up in the temple and began to shout, “If any one is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink!” The cry was filled with passion and compassion. Hurting man was thirsty, religion could never quench this thirst. Living water was the only thing that would do.

Martin Luther spoke about this spiritual thirst in his day, check it out. “Those who are thirsty have a comforting preacher in Christ himself. He shows them where they can quench their thirst—in him, the Lord Christ. But first we must ask, “What kind of thirst is this?” Only then will we understand what Christ means by drinking and how we can quench our thirst. This thirst is not a physical thirst that can be satisfied by drinking beer and wine. Rather, it's a spiritual

thirst—a thirst of the soul. It’s the desire of a sad, miserable, frightened, and battered conscience. It’s the desire of a despairing and terrified heart that wants to know how it stands before God. The thirsty are the timid and fainthearted people who feel their sinfulness and the weaknesses of their spirit, soul, and body. They study God’s warnings. They fear the Lord God and take note of his law, anger, judgment, death, and other punishments. This fear is true thirst. Naturally, those with fears, temptations, and needs are very thirsty because of their anxiety. Their tongues become dry. They become feverish, and their fears dehydrate them. This fear is what creates spiritual thirst.”

So are you one of those thirsty ones? Have you tried to satisfy your thirst drinking from the wells of the pleasures of this life? Have you tried to cleanse your conscience at the wells of religion. Both of those wells will leave you dry and thirsty. Jesus is still crying out to whosoever will. His voice is filled with acceptance, love, and urgency. Come and drink and find rest for your soul.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss Luther's quote and how it still relates to our present world.

HEALING WATERS

A lot happened to me stemming from the outpouring of the Spirit beginning in 1994. I guess it all started for me with an adjustment. I often joke that my “receiver” had been broken. Just as a radio has a receiver, every Christian also has to actually become a receiver for his own well being as well as for those he is to reach out to. Well, mine had been broken. As a young Christian I had unknowingly grown adept at receiving. Later on, the years of pastoring had dulled my spiritual senses and as a result my “receiver” had been broken. In the Holy Spirit atmosphere of revival, The Lord began to open my heart again. I began to drink living waters. My soul began to spring back into life. Here are some powerful words about today’s verse from Andrew Murray.

“Jesus said in his conversation with the Samaritan woman, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst” (John 4:13–14). In today’s text the promise is even greater: Rivers of living water will flow from his heart, bringing life and blessing to others.

These waters are called “living” for a reason. Everywhere the river goes everything springs back to life. You see, learning to receive was not the end of this experience, it was the opening of the door into a whole new way of life. All you need is to open a crack in your closed heart, the water is looking for a way to come flooding in. From that point, everything begins to

change. Your heart is healed, spiritual hunger replaces apathy and dryness, bondages to habits are all broken, and the broken parts of your life begin to come alive. Healing waters have come, drink in and be made whole.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss healing waters!

MY GOSPEL OR NOT

Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me." John 7:16

Jesus spoke like no other man had ever spoken. He spoke with authority. How could He speak with such authority? Because His teaching was not His, He only spoke the words given Him by His Father. So in one sense the teaching was not His, yet in another sense it was very much His. His teaching was backed by the authority of heaven. That's how it can be with us today. If we empty ourselves of ourselves and yield our lives to Him, His teaching becomes our teaching. Worldly people will not like it (they killed Jesus too) but the truth remains. Here is how Martin Luther describes this phenomenon in his own ministry.

"Christ answered his adversaries carefully. He showed that he understood them and realized they were accusing and slandering him. They thought his teaching came from the devil. So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me." Does that make sense? If Jesus' words were not his own, why did he preach, promote, and embrace them so strongly? Why did he refuse to accept the honor of his own words? Why didn't he say, "This is my teaching"? Christians often say, "This is my sermon, my baptism, my Christ, my God." Or we might say, "my gospel." Yet none of these are ours, for we didn't create them. They didn't originate in us. They aren't our works. Yet, at the same time, they are ours because God gives them to us. This is why I insist that this gospel is mine. It's different than the teaching of other preachers. This is my teaching—in other words, Luther's teaching. At the same time, I'm saying, "It's not my teaching. It's not my work, but God's gift." I didn't create it in my head. It didn't grow in my garden. I didn't give birth to it. Rather, it's God's gift. So both are true. The gospel is mine, yet it's not mine, because it's God's."

In today's secularized society, preaching Christ is becoming more and more despised. If you ever share about holiness or repentance, watch out. You will be accused of being judgmental or having a religious attitude or spirit. In today's "anything goes" society, any righteous standards are now considered narrow minded or hateful. The message of grace has been dragged

through the gutter and has been spun to embrace any type of sinful behavior as being “covered by grace”. Biblical grace forgives the darkest sin but refuses to stop there. True Biblical grace liberates from the snare of sin that we can actually live a moral, and yes, holy life. Drinking from His cup of grace satisfies the part of us that longs for other pleasures. It actually takes away our thirst for other things. This teaching is not mine but it is Paul’s (or Luther’s) or even better, it is Christ’s. If I am not mistaken He said, “If the Son sets you free you are free indeed”.

SPIRITUAL DEHYDRATION

...and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Just as He provided bread for the children of Israel in the wilderness, Moses’ unseen Friend was their source of water as well. The water that came from the rock is an awesome picture of the only drink that will satisfy a thirsty soul. We need to drink of the Lord’s presence every day, drinking in His living waters.

Recently, I was speaking to a pastor friend about chronic dehydration. He said that 80% of all Americans are dehydrated. While those figures can be questioned, dehydration is real and can cause severe medical problems. The symptoms that result from natural dehydration, parallel spiritual symptoms that result in spiritual problems that come from a lack of spiritual water. A dry mouth is the first symptom of dehydration. Some Christians have dry mouths. All they talk about are the things of the world, things that don’t edify. They never talk about the things of God.

Their mouths are full of dryness. Constipation is the second symptom of dehydration. If you don’t have enough water in your system, your body can become constipated. This is even true for little babies. They can become dehydrated and experience a lot of pain and discomfort. In the same way, spiritually dehydrated people have difficulty expelling the waste in their lives. They are constipated with the things of this world.

Exhaustion is a third symptom of dehydration. People who don’t drink enough of the living water can feel tired all the time. They may think they have no time for the things of God, such as church on Sunday night and Wednesday night. Too tired to go to a home group or to Bible school, they may not even have enough energy to share the gospel or to pray and seek the Lord.

The absence of tears is another symptom of dehydration. In spiritual dehydration, the things of God don’t affect you emotionally. Lack of elasticity is the fifth symptom of dehydration. The body starts to age and doesn’t repair quickly. Spiritually, this means that a

person gets bent out of shape and easily offended. This is a sure sign of someone who is not drinking deeply of the fountain of living water.

One of the most interesting characteristics of dehydration is that people often mistake their thirst for hunger pains, and they think they need to eat. According to the article, if people drank a lot of water before going to sleep at night, they wouldn't wake up feeling hungry. How many people do you know who think they need more teaching when what they really need is a drink from the well of life?

There are some interesting parallels in this illustration and some good spiritual lessons to be learned. I don't want to become spiritually constipated, nor do I want to become tired or emotionally insensitive to the things of God. I don't want to become cranky and carry around offenses everywhere I go. And, believe me, offenses will come. Instead, I want to be thirsty, and I want to drink of the presence of the Lord.

LESSON EIGHT

JESUS-THE DEFENDER OF THE WEAK

When we hear the story of the woman caught in adultery we know she was defenseless. She could not hire a lawyer. There was no man to take up for her. People would only comment about how wicked the times had become or she was just evil. Intimidated by the mob and by religious folk, she would be harassed and hooted out of the public square.

She was embarrassed in front of everyone. She might even be stoned, but no one seemed to care. In terror and panic, her frightened eyes must have furtively searched for a way to escape. Jesus' silence must have been deafening. She burned with anger and embarrassment. The ministry of Jesus is to defend the defenseless; "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" John 3:17. In this case Jesus took her up! He became her Defense Attorney! He drove off the Prosecution by challenging their consciences. Then, Jesus was left alone with the woman.

Ramsay in Biblical Illustrator says; "Mercy and misery met together. A sinner and the Savior in the temple of God, face to face and alone.

Let us all turn to the Lord that defends the weak and the broken hearted. He will lift us up!

THE ENTRANCE OF LIFE BRINGS FORGIVENESS

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, "Woman, where are those, thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" John 8:10

Jesus always found the dirty stuff or I should say it found Him, so it was only natural for Him to start writing in it. When the dust settles and the accusers leave, Jesus will be found with the answer for He writes upon our hearts. The people who creep away are the ones still left with the dirt upon their hearts. The woman caught in adultery was having a God encounter. Jesus saw "none but the woman!" When man drags us into court, Christ becomes the remedy!

Expositors Bible says, "But what will Jesus do with this woman thus left on His hands? He knew what she was going back to-a blighted home-life, a life full now of perplexity, of regret, of suspicion, probably of ill-usage, of contempt, of everything that makes men and women bitter

and drives them on to sin. Yet He implies that the legitimate result of forgiveness is renunciation of sin. Others might expect her to sin; He expected her to abandon sin. If the love shown us in forgiveness is no barrier to sin, it is because we have not been in earnest as yet about our sin, and forgiveness is but a name. Do we need an external scene such as that before us as the setting which may enable us to believe that we are sinners, and that there is forgiveness for us? The entrance to life is through forgiveness.”

Christ comes and His work is but one. To dig around in our dirt and erase the guilt and shame of yesteryear. He can break the cycle, He can cause the rebellious to sing the new song. Christ and this woman were destined for that meeting today, I say it’s high time for you to do the same! He will be there!

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss what dirt needs to be dug up in your life!

THE BROKEN HEART

John 8:10-11 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

This past Sunday was Easter Sunday. Just before I went to the platform to minister the Word, we showed a short excerpt from the Passion of the Christ. This portion was about the woman caught in adultery. The film portrayed her sin in the light of Christ's suffering under the Roman whips and His death on the cross. You were given visual pictures of the woman watching The Lord die, and flashing back to her forgiveness when she first met Christ. As she crawled towards Jesus, stretching out her hand to touch His feet, I thought I was going to explode. Suddenly I saw me, I saw us, I saw sinners coming in repentance to the feet of Jesus. Anyone who comes with a broken and contrite heart will be received. Not only will they be received, they will be healed and loved by the Lover of our souls. Jonathan Edwards described this contrition in relation to us pouring out true worship back to our Lord.

"Believers don't only pour forth the exercises of grace out of a pure heart. True Christian grace and divine love always flows out of a broken heart, an heart broken with a sense of sin. And the heart of a saint never sends forth such a sweet savor as when it is most broken and contrite, as is evidenced by Psalms 34:18, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as be of a contrite spirit”; and Psalms 51:17, “The sacrifices of God are a broken

spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Isaiah 57:15, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones”; Isaiah 66:1-02, “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.” And grace never gives as sweet a savor to the believer himself."

As I began to preach that morning, I felt the oil of His forgiveness pouring all over me. This is where our worship and our ministry come from. As He ministers to us, we pour our oil back on Him and whoever will listen to our words.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the power of forgiveness and have you forgiven yourself?

SIN NO MORE

John 8:11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

What a powerful demonstration of total forgiveness with an expectation of holiness. Only Jesus and the message of salvation by grace alone can encompass the diversity of grace and holiness seen in the gospel of Jesus Christ. There has been a recent emphasis on the so-called "grace message." It has become quite popular and the promoters of this message have been trending in the past year. What has been deemed the "grace message" is really just a rehashed version of what has been historically called antinomianism. The teachers who have popularized this message have focused on the forgiveness part but have steered clear of the “go and sin no more part.” Preaching only part of the truth is dangerous. It brings the hearers into a false sense of security and actually inoculates them from receiving the truth. You see, the woman in this story came face to face with grace and holiness. The Lord is a God with endless mercy and total and complete holiness. These two characteristics at first glance are perceived as enemies but they meet and kiss at a place called Calvary. When we hear the biblical version of justification by grace through faith not only is there a forgiveness of our past sin, there is a joyful connection to Christ Himself and the purity and holiness that comes with that new life. Matthew Poole had some insight into this passage.

"Sin no more; whatever becometh of thee as to man's judgment, thou hast reason to fear the greater judgment of God, if thou goest on in a course of sin. Nor doth he say, Commit adultery no more; but, sin no more. No partial repentance or sorrow for any particular sin will suffice a penitent that hopes for any mercy from God; but a leaving off all sin, of what kind soever it be."

So have you drunk from this cup called grace? How can you know? Well, there are two critical indications that you have tasted of His grace. First, your sense of guilt is gone. Your sins have been forgiven. The shame and darkness have been removed from your soul. You have been made righteous by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. The second indication is quite profound. Your heart has been changed. You no longer have the itch to live a sinful life. Your heart is being drawn to other things. Instead of a life being lived in the shadows, you have stepped into the blazing light of His glorious day. Now you know what it means to go and sin no more. Sin is no longer the main attraction in your life.

I love the profound simplicity found in the message of the gospel. His willingness to forgive is a stumbling block to the legalists; His call to holiness is offensive to the promoters of this message of cheap grace. To those who are being saved, it is the sweetest song of all, it is the song of His Amazing Grace.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the two questions posed by Pastor Frank, "How do we know if we have tasted of his grace or not?"

FREEDOM FROM SIN

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed": John 8:36

The gospel is so simple that even a child can grasp it; yet it is so profound that the most intelligent often miss it. We are saved and set free from the bondage of sin by faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. It is the same old story, but with those who have ears to hear it, it is new and refreshing every day. We are all effected daily by the culture that we live in; from off color comments to complaining, from temptations to catastrophic news, it is easy to fall under the sway of this world. The new old story found in the gospel will cleanse us and settle us, there is life and power in the word of God. Here is how Martin Luther explained it in his day.

"True freedom is being free from sin. How does this happen? It happens when we hear his Word—Christ was born of Mary, suffered, was crucified, died, was buried, and rose again

from the dead on the third day. “Oh,” we might say, “I know that message well. It is a very familiar sermon.” But let’s learn this lesson again from our children, for it tells us how we can be saved and be set free. “Yes,” we might even say, “This teaching is too simple. That’s why it won’t work.” But it’s a virtue that children can pray these words and understand them so easily. We are old fools. The more educated and intelligent we become, the less we know and understand. So we must sit with the children by the stove and learn the lesson again. There are some who say they have already been taught the message and think they know everything about it. But when troubles come, they desperately need someone to recite these words to them again. They end up needing a four-year-old child to show them how to believe.”

So maybe you are down in the dumps or struggling with compromise and sin. The solution is the same as it has been from ancient days, look to God’s word. It may be old fashioned but it is alive and as new today as it was when it was first written down. Delight yourself in His word, you will suddenly have a new way to look at everything.

“BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS I AM”

John.8:58 – Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”

I remember the first time this verse grabbed me. I was living in California attending Bible School and it was Saturday, our day off. While reading this passage I saw the amazing claim of Christ as He talked with the religious leaders. “Before Abraham was, I am”. It couldn’t get any clearer to the Jewish mind, Jesus claimed deity twice in one short statement. First He said that He was in existence before the founder of the Jewish race, Abraham. Secondly, He spoke the unutterable; He said that before Abraham was I am. He was associating with the name of God revealed to Moses at the burning bush. Not only was He around before Abraham and Moses, He has always been. He is uncreated, the eternal second person in the Godhead. He is the Son of God or you could say God the Son. Christ was unveiling His eternal nature. This is the greatest of all mysteries, the Eternal One in human nature; unthinkable. Here is how Matthew Henry describes this.

“The change of the word is observable, and bespeaks Abraham a creature, and himself the Creator; well therefore might he make himself greater than Abraham. Before Abraham he was, First, As God. I am, is the name of God; it denotes his self-existence; he does not say, I was, but I am, for he is the first and the last, immutably the same; thus he was not only before Abraham, but before all worlds. Secondly, As Mediator. He was the appointed Messiah, long before Abraham; the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the channel of conveyance of light, life, and love from God to man. This supposes his divine nature, that he is the same in himself from

eternity... Abraham was the root of the Jewish nation, the rock out of which they were hewn. If Christ was before Abraham, his doctrine and religion were no novelty, but were, in the substance of them, prior to Judaism, and ought to take place of it.”

Reading that passage that morning marked a change in my view of Christ as a new Christian. I was living in the fire of the Jesus movement in California. I had been consumed with the humanity of Christ for that first year; now I was overwhelmed by His deity. The Eternal One in a human body – absolutely devastating.

JESUS CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Jn.8:12 – Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world”.

Light is part of God’s intricate and beautiful creation. It came into existence as the Lord declared, “Let there be light”. Actually light is the first thing we see created in the Genesis account. Strangely enough, the sun and moon were not created until God’s fourth day. This makes me immediately think about the new heavens and the new earth with the New Jerusalem. The Lord said that the sun will not be the light there, but the Lamb will be the light of that city. Apparently, the sun and the other lights in the heavens were created as pictures of the true light. We have no idea what creation was like before the fall of Lucifer and later on the fall of man. Apparently creation was quite different before their fall. Even in this darkened world today the brilliance of the light of Christ shines into our hearts. We are awakened by His glorious light. Here is a quote from Jonathan Edwards on this verse.

“God the Father is an infinite fountain of light, but Jesus Christ is the communication of this light... God the Father, in himself, was never seen: ’tis God the Son that has been the light that hath revealed him. God is an infinitely bright and glorious being, but Jesus Christ is that brightness of his glory by which he is revealed to us.... It was the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, that all along appeared to the patriarchs, that manifested himself to Adam and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and went before the children of Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, that descended on mount Sinai, that was seen by Moses and spake to him face to face as a man speaks to his friend, that dwelt between the cherubims: ’twas the same Jesus Christ that afterwards appeared in the form of sinful flesh and took on him our natures, and said, “before Abraham was, I am,” that here compares himself to light.”

It seems to me that the darkness of this world is becoming deeper as the end of the age draws near. This light that shines out from the Lord has shone into our hearts. Today, Christians

are the light of the world. Darkness cannot win. We must be determined to let our light shine in these dark times.

DANCING IN THE LIGHT

Jn.8:12 – Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.

The words of Jesus have always been illuminating. His words are filled with revelation and light. Until our eyes are opened we can't grasp the beauty and power of His words, our eyes are closed to His light and beauty. Like it says in the Psalms, “the entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple”. Today's verse is quite powerful, especially if you consider the context and location of this statement. It happened in connection with the feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. This quote from Barclay may give us insight into what Jesus was saying.

“On the evening of its first day (of the feast of tabernacles) there was a ceremony called The Illumination of the Temple. It took place in the Court of the Women. The court was surrounded with deep galleries, erected to hold the spectators. In the centre four great candelabra were prepared. When the dark came the four great candelabra were lit and, it was said, they sent such a blaze of light throughout Jerusalem that every courtyard was lit up with their brilliance. Then all night long, until cock-crow the next morning, the greatest and the wisest and the holiest men in Israel danced before the Lord and sang psalms of joy and praise while the people watched. Jesus is saying: “You have seen the blaze of the Temple illuminations piercing the darkness of the night. I am the Light of the World, and, for the man who follows me there will be light, not only for one exciting night, but for all the pathway of his life. The light in the Temple is a brilliant light, but in the end it flickers and dies. I am the Light which lasts for ever.”

Jesus was using this vivid picture that was fresh in everyone's mind to share about Him being the light of the world. The celebrants had been dancing in the light of the candelabra in Jerusalem, Jesus was telling them about another celebration that takes place in the light of His presence. The Old Testament festivals were always pointing to New Testament realities. When the true light breaks into your life that is when the true dancing begins. Jesus is the light of the world, He can light up your life and bring you into this celebration of light.

Spurgeon Quotes- “Would you mind looking in your Bibles into the next chapter, which fitly follows the present one? It contains the story of the man blind from his birth, to whom the Savior gave sight. Let me read a description of the kind of faith which I desire for you all. "Jesus

heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus aid unto him, Thou hast both seen him and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." That is the faith which saves, the faith which learns of Jesus from Jesus; hears and believes, and takes Jesus to be its God. The faith which bows at the feet of Jesus, and worships him as divine, is the faith which saves. Men will not do this till their eyes have been opened. While they say, "We see," their sin remains, and their blindness too. Only he who can say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see," will worship Jesus with all his heart. The gracious Lord has come and touched my sightless eyeballs, and given me heavenly sight, and therefore I trust him. I, that could see nothing at all, have seen him! I, that had no idea of what light was, for I was born blind, I have seen the light through him, and I both believe and adore! Oh, for a worshipping faith, faith on its knees in the presence of the Son of God; faith beholding Jesus, with the eye which he has opened! Alas!" says one, "I wish I had that faith." Listen, then, that you may find it. Faith cometh by hearing."

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss what one can do when we feel our faith is too small.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

You often hear Christians say, "We live in a dark world". Have you ever really thought about that statement? What is a 'dark world'? All darkness is, is the absence of light. In this case, it is the absence of spiritual light. Jesus said that He is the light of the world. While He was present on earth, everywhere He went the light shined. It was shining through His words and shining through His actions. The light shone when He declared "I am the light of the world". This radiant light may have shone its brightest as He prayed on the cross, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do". When He multiplied the bread and fish, opened the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, and when the lame danced for joy; His light was piercing the darkness. Here are some thoughts from Tyndale's Commentary on today's verse.

"Jesus presented himself as the light of the world at the Feast of Tabernacles; a festival during which great candles lit up the courtyards of Jerusalem every night. However, Jesus' claim to be the light of the world contained more than allusions to the great illuminations of the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus promised, Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Those who followed him by accepting his teaching would no longer walk in the

darkness of ignorance under the power of the evil one. As the apostle Paul said, 'he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves'. As life in the darkness culminates in death, life in the light of Christ culminates in eternal life; it is 'the light of life'. In the Prologue the evangelist said of the Logos, 'In him was life, and that life was the light of men'. To come to Christ means coming to the one in whom is found the life of God, and that life is the light of men, the light of life."

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss Pastor Frank Bailey's quote, "Today that light shines through the faces of His sons and daughters. We are now the light of the world. He shines through our words and our actions. As we walk with Him, His love penetrates the world we live in. You effect your world more than you know."

LESSON NINE

JOHN 9- “THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD”

NIGHTTIME IS COMING

John 9:4 - I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

There was a famous video that circulated from the Brownsville Revival that this verse reminds me of. In the video, a teenage girl is shaking under the power of the Spirit as she begins to testify. She described how the fire of God had fallen on her and was calling her to repentance. She began to shake more violently as she repeated again and again, “There is not much time”. Jesus is very clear in this passage about the meaning of the miracle of healing on the blind man. Now that you can see, walk in the light. Make good use of your time for His glory because the nighttime is rapidly approaching. Here is how Barclay describes this verse.

“Jesus goes on to say that he and all his followers must do God's work while there is time to do it. God gave men the day for work and the night for rest; the day comes to an end and the time for work is also ended. For Jesus it was true that he had to press on with God's work in the day for the night of the Cross lay close ahead. But it is true for every man. We are given only so much time. Whatever we are to do must be done within it. There is in Glasgow a sundial with the motto: "Tak' tent of time ere time be tint." "Take thought of time before time is ended." We should never put things off until another time, for another time may never come. The Christian's duty is to fill the time he has--and no man knows how much that will be--with the service of God and of his fellow-men. There is no more poignant sorrow than the tragic discovery that it is too late to do something which we might have done.”

The awakening of our soul can be quite shocking, just like the light breaking into this blind man's life for the first time. Once you see Christ and taste eternity for yourself you begin to recognize that we are at the end of this prophetic day. The day of His kingdom is breaking in upon us; we must do our utmost to win souls at this hour.

DISCUSSION:

1.How can be we ready?

CANDLES WERE MADE TO BURN MERRY MONDAY BY PARRIS

“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.” John 9:4

Tomorrow we close on the buying of the new Bethesda Community that will house disciples. At the same time we hear across the world that Syrian children and others were burned by chemical warfare, an Egyptian church was bombed with people worshipping inside and a famine is brewing in Africa. You can either run and hide, close the curtains or be disciples. Christ came with a mandate and in turn he gave us the same. Do you join with him in working the works of God? Candles were made to burn and built for light. The night comes my friends and the great ticking clock never stops.

McClarans says “He that can say, as Jesus Christ did say: ‘My meat’-the refreshment of my nature, the necessary sustenance of my being-’is to do the will of my Father’; that man, and that man alone, feels no pressure. When ‘I will’ and ‘I choose’ coincide, like two of Euclid’s triangles atop of one another, line for line and angle for angle, then comes liberty into the life. He that can say, ‘Thy law is within my heart,’ that is the Christlike, the free, the happy man.”

There is nothing like being free yet having purpose. If we don’t watch out, we lose our perspective on why we are in existence. We need to make a business of it. Matthew Henry says, “Shall we be willing to be loose, when Christ was willing to be bound? Christ, having laid himself under obligations to do his work, laid out himself with the utmost vigor and industry in his work. He worked the works he had to do; did ergazesthai ta erga—made a business of that which was his business. It is not enough to look at our work, and talk over it, but we must work it. Work while we have opportunity - The time of our life is our day, in which it concerns us to do the work of the day. Day-time is the proper season for work (Ps. 104:22, 23); during the day of life we must be busy, not waste day-time, nor play by day-light; it will be time enough to rest when our day is done, for it is but a day.”

Let your light shine. What were candles made for but to burn?

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss how you are bringing your light to the darkness around you.

HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN

John 9:4,5 I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind? Doesn't that sound familiar. If something bad happens it surely must be your fault. That is exactly what Job's friends had said to Job. All these bad things happening in your life, Job, something must be wrong. If you listen carefully to what Jesus said that is not always the case. Sometimes sin is the direct cause of a sickness or problem, BUT NOT ALWAYS. In this case Jesus said this man was born blind so that the Glory of God could be clearly seen through his healing. Jesus healed this man simply to display the power of His love and the greatness of His mercy and grace. Maybe you are facing some real problems. Rather than suffocating under condemnation and guilt look to God. Maybe you too are a candidate for the Lord to show His glory. Here is how Matthew Henry describes this miracle.

"The sinfulness of the whole race of mankind does indeed justify God in all the miseries of human life; so that those who have the least share of them must say that God is kind, and those who have the largest share must not say that he is unjust; but many are made much more miserable than others in this life who are not at all more sinful. Not but that this man was a sinner, and his parents sinners, but it was not any uncommon guilt that God had an eye to in inflicting this upon him. Note, We must take heed of judging any to be great sinners merely because they are great sufferers, lest we be found, not only persecuting those whom God has smitten, but accusing those whom he has justified, and condemning those for whom Christ died, which is daring and dangerous. That they are sometimes intended purely for the glory of God, and the manifesting of his works."

So maybe, just maybe your suffering is about to come to an end. Just like the blind man, His blindness gave way to the Light of the World.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss what Pastor Frank Bailey says; "Is it possible that God has a plan and your problem is just another way for the Lord to show His kindness and His power in your life?"

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John 9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. One of His first acts was to create light itself, "Let there be light". If you read the creation account closely you will see that God created light before He created the sun, moon, and stars. Light is one of God's great mysteries. It carries heat, energy, and visibility. One of the things we take most for granted is one of the greatest blessings and needs that we have; seeing, heat, and energy. The spiritual parallel to the importance of light is seen in this miracle of Jesus. The man in this story had never seen, he was born blind. If the truth were known, this man is every man. We may be born seeing physically but a greater blindness hinders all of us. We are all born in spiritual darkness, unable to see and enjoy the glory of God. When the first ray of light penetrates the shroud that blinds our eyes, our whole being is suddenly flooded with light. Like the man born blind, "I once was blind but now I see." Here are some thoughts from Matthew Henry on today's miracle.

"His business in the world was to enlighten it: As long as I am in the world, and that will not be long, I am the light of the world. He had said this before. He is the Sun of righteousness, that has not only light in his wings for those that can see, but healing in his wings, or beams, for those that are blind and cannot see, therein far exceeding in virtue that great light which rules by day. Christ would cure this blind man, the representative of a blind world, because he came to be the light of the world, not only to give light, but to give sight. Now this gives us a great encouragement to come to him, as a guiding, quickening, refreshing light. To whom should we look but to him? Which way should we turn our eyes, but to the light? We partake of the sun's light, and so we may of Christ's grace, without money and without price."

Jesus is the prophetic Sun of Righteousness with healing in His beams. His light floods our whole being. We can not only see Him by this light, we see His beautiful creation. I never appreciated the beauty of God or His beauty all around me until the day He opened my eyes.

YOUR HANGING SPAGHETTI ON MY EARS

John 9:6 - When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes,

This poor blind man got totally blindsided. He was minding his own business, begging on the side of the road. This was just like any other boring day until he heard something unusual. You must be jerking my chain! (in Russia they say you are hanging spaghetti on my ears) He heard someone gathering saliva in his mouth and spitting. The next thing he knew someone was

applying mud (made with spit) on his eyes. Then he heard a voice like he had never hear before, “Go wash your eyes in the Pool of Siloam”. After making his way to the pool and washing his eyes he could hardly believe it, HE COULD SEE !!! He could hardly believe what had happened, you have got to be kidding, who put this spaghetti on my ears?

Sometimes, that’s how it is with the Lord. You are just enduring the same old same old and suddenly, out of the blue, Jesus walks into the room. When that happens a whole new world begins to unfold. That was just the beginning of this man’s drama. Next, he found himself caught up in a theological debate. Really? This is just a common beggar and now he finds himself debating with religious experts. The teachers said Jesus had violated the Sabbath by making mud and healing his eyes. The beggar said, “I don’t know about any of that. All I know is that I was blind and now I see”.

This is how it is with anyone who experiences a radical life change from the Lord. We may spend the rest of our lives studying to find out what really happened to us. I have to agree with the beggar, “I don’t know about a lot of things but Jesus touched me and my life has been changed”.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss Pastor Frank Bailey’s quote “So maybe you are getting ready for one of those strange life changing moments. It often happens suddenly, without any warning. I guess the one recommendation that I have for you is this, don’t get set in your mind the way the change is going to come. It could come through spit and mud but it just may come with someone hanging spaghetti on your ears.”- How does this relate to your circumstances?

SPIT AND CLAY

Jn.9:6,7 - Then Jesus spat on the ground and made some clay with his saliva. Then he anointed the blind man’s eyes with the clay. And he said to the blind man, “Now go and wash the clay from your eyes in the ritual pool of Siloam.” So he went and washed his face and as he came back, he could see for the first time in his life!

This poor blind man never had a life, he never even had a chance. He had been blind from the day he was born. All he knew was darkness and the feelings of rejection from the world around him. Blindness, especially born this way, carried a stigma for this society. He was considered cursed; curses and whisperings is all this blind man had ever known. That all changed the day Jesus stepped into his world. He heard Jesus spit and then he heard the strange command, “Go wash in the Pool of Siloam”. The Passion Notes give us a sense of what this blind man was feeling.

“John has left us a book of pictures. The picture here is the mingling of spit and clay, a picture of the Christ who is God and man. The saliva comes from the mouth, the spoken Word, God incarnate. The clay is always a picture of man, for our human vessel is a jar of clay. No doubt, the blind man had heard people spit as they walked by him, as a sign of disgust, for in that day they believed blindness was caused by a curse. But this day, as he heard Jesus spit on the ground, it was for his healing.”

What a strange way to heal the sick. Jesus spit on the ground and made mud (how much spit are we talking about?). Then he sends the blind man on a journey through the streets of the city to the Pool of Siloam which was thought to be a distance away. What a scene, a blind man groping his way down the street with spit and clay dripping from his eyes. What happened next changed everything. He came back seeing for the first time in his life. His parents were shocked, the Pharisees were angered, the disciples were taught, and the Lord was glorified. And oh I almost forgot. Siloam means sent, this blind man became one of God’s sent ones showing the glory of God through his brand new life.

GO WASH

John.9:6,7 - Then Jesus spat on the ground and made some clay with his saliva. Then he anointed the blind man’s eyes with the clay. And he said to the blind man, “Now go and wash the clay from your eyes in the ritual pool of Siloam.” So he went and washed his face and as he came back, he could see for the first time in his life!

This is one of the great miracles in the ministry of Jesus. This poor man had been blind his whole life. He had never seen the light of day, his mother’s smile, or his dad’s strong hands. John said that he was born that way; the obvious question is why? Why are some people born with such adversity? It just doesn’t seem fair; I guess you have to say life is not always fair. But this is where the story gets really good. The disciples wanted to know why this man was born blind. Was it his parents' sins or this man’s sins that he would inevitably commit. Jesus had a different answer. He said this man was born blind to display the glory of God through healing. Wow! The Passion Notes take that thought and expand on it. He was called to be sent out. Check this out.

“The pool of apostleship.” Siloam is a Hebrew word that means “to be sent” or “to be commissioned”—the Greek word for apostle or apostleship is the closest meaning. The apostle of our faith is the Lord Jesus Christ who was sent from the Father. To wash in the Pool of Apostleship is to recognize the healing that flows from the One who was sent from heaven.”

Jesus went on to use this miracle to teach about the urgency of the hour, nighttime is coming. Now is the time to work. Again the Passion Notes bring this out.

“In the context of Jesus’ teaching on the light of the world and mankind being in the dark, this miracle of giving sight to the blind man is a powerful proof of Jesus’ words. Christ, in his birth, became a man of clay. When he applies this clay over our eyes and we wash in the water of his Word, our spiritual sight is restored.”

Frank Bailey-“We live at the closing of the age. Nighttime is upon us. It's time for His sent ones to show His glory to this dark world.” How does this correspond with this present hour?

POOL OF SILOAM

John 9:7 And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

This is the story of one of the great miracles in the ministry of Jesus. This is the story of the man who was born blind and healed by the power of God. The details are quite significant, and as always, quite unusual. This man who was blind from birth, had an encounter with Jesus. It started with a discussion between Jesus and his disciples about the role of sin in this man's sickness. Jesus said that in this case, this man or his parents carried no responsibility for his ailment. The Lord viewed it as an opportunity to display the power of God. Jesus spit on the ground, made "clay" from the mud and told the man to go wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam. This pool carried all sorts of connection to messianic types and shadows pointing to the ministry of the messiah. Here is a quote from the Fire Bible about this special pool.

"Furthermore, Jesus tells the man to wash in the pool of Siloam. This pool connects this healing story with the Tabernacles celebration, important in chapters 7–8. Its name also connects with Jesus. Siloam is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Shiloach, which means “the sent one.” The Hebrew word may be connected to “Shiloah” (cf. Isa. 8:6), which may in turn be Shiloh of Genesis 49:10 (cf. NIV note there). Both Jewish and Christian interpretations connected Shiloh with the Messiah. In John, Jesus is the “Sent One” (cf. 5:36–38; 8:16). He is the rock out of which comes the water (i.e., Spirit), who brings life, spiritual sight, and physical healing."

The feast of Tabernacles speaks about the water of life that bubbles up in us like a fountain. This blind man got more than physical healing that day, He began to drink from the eternal waters of life that brought light and awakening to his whole being. Today these waters are available for all of us. We can go and wash ourselves in these waters of renewal, and like the

blind man, will find ourselves looking into the face of Jesus. The Lord also used this opportunity to speak about the coming darkness. He said time was precious and it was important to make the most of our time. Here is a quote from Leon Morris and his comments on this verse.

"There are heaven sent works that we must do. And there is an urgency about doing them, for the opportunity will not always be present, night is coming the remorseless passage of time removes the present opportunity."

Maybe we are not blind like the man in this story, but let's just say we may not see as clearly as we should.

Frank Bailey- "If that is the case, let's go wash the mud from our eyes in this pool of renewal. Maybe then we will see this prophetic moment that we live in."

LIAR, LUNATIC, OR SON OF GOD

John.9:15 - Then the Pharisees asked the man, "How did you have your sight restored?" He replied, "A man anointed my eyes with clay, then I washed, and now I can see for the first time in my life!"

The story of the man born blind is about more than just physical blindness. What the real story is about is spiritual perception. This blind man had no idea who Jesus was that first Sabbath day he met Him. He was just caught up in his daily begging routine and the Sabbath was normally his best day for that. Suddenly there was an unexpected interruption. This man named Jesus was spitting, making mud, and rubbing it on his eyes. "Go wash in the pool of Siloam" he heard. Suddenly he was feeling his way through the streets to wash his eyes. Why did he listen to Jesus? Was it the authority in His voice that produced an anticipation? As the story unfolded the blind man came to some new conclusions. He was more than a man, maybe a prophet. After the washing and he could see, he began to see Christ as a healer. But there was more. When he saw Jesus again with his own eyes, he saw who He really was, He was the Son of God. Here is how C. S. Lewis describes who Jesus is.

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something

worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

HOW DO WE REALLY KNOW?

John.9:32,33 - “Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.”

People always try to blame spiritual things on the devil. Everyone from Jesus to Jonathan Edwards to the present day, religious people have a very hard time with the power of God and the moving of the Spirit. In today’s story about the blind man, the blind man turns the tables on the Pharisees. He came out and just said it, “Isn’t it remarkable that you don’t recognize this miracle as the work of God?” Since when did the devil heal blind people?”. In Edwards' day the religious also resisted the move of God. Edwards said that if a manifestation of the Spirit glorified Christ and changed people for the good, it must be the Lord. Here are Edwards’ own words on this topic.

“When a Ministry raises people’s esteem of the one true Jesus Christ, who was Born of a Virgin and was Crucified — if it confirms and establishes their minds in the truth that He is the Son of God and the Savior of men — then it is a sure sign that it is from the Spirit of God. If the spirit at work among a people convinces them of Christ and leads them to Him; if it confirms their minds in the belief of the history of Christ as He appeared in the flesh; if it teaches them that He is the Son of God to save sinners; if it reveals that He is the only Savior, and that they stand in great need of Him; and if it begets in them higher and more honorable thoughts of Christ than they used to have; if it inclines their affections more to Him — that is a sure sign that it is the true and right Spirit. This is true even though we are ultimately incapable of determining whether anyone’s conviction or affections reflect real saving Faith.”

This blind man got put out of the synagogue for his belief in Christ. He apparently didn’t care. He could now see and was a follower of Jesus. Maybe you have been touched by the Lord and are being misunderstood or even criticized. You are in good company, Jesus, the man born blind, Jonathan Edwards and believers from every generation have been attacked because of spiritual awakening.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss Frank Bailey’s quote; “I guess the question we have to answer is this, am I better off now than before?” Are you?

LESSON TEN

JOHN CHAPTER 10 “THE GOOD SHEPHERD”

“But because they belong to Christ and have recognized Him as Lord and Master of their lives, their owner and manager, they are permeated by a deep, quiet, settled peace that is beautiful to behold.” – W. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*

“Contentment should be the hallmark of the man or woman who has put his or her affairs in the hands of God.” – W. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

The Lord is pictured as a shepherd all throughout the scriptures. David tenderly called us "the sheep of His pasture". In the time of Christ, the shepherd would often have a relationship with his sheep. He would raise them from birth, protect them, feed them, guide them, correct them, and nurse them back to health when they were sick or injured. Jesus portrayed Himself in one of His parables as the Shepherd who left the ninety nine sheep in search of the one that had strayed from the flock. This analogy is very powerful and quite moving, especially to those who have experienced first hand the tender, personal care of our Lord. We can remember clearly how far we had strayed from His care when He sought us out, won our hearts with His love, carried us back to the flock, and lovingly ministered to us and nursed us back to health. He refuses to give up on His own. Matthew Henry has some insightful thoughts about the parable of the Shepherd and the lost sheep. Here is something he said of the Lord's story.

"This is very applicable to the great work of our redemption. Mankind were gone astray. The value of the whole race to God was not so much as that of one sheep to him that had a hundred; what loss would it have been to God if they had all been left to perish? There is a world of holy angels that are as the ninety-nine sheep, a noble flock; yet God sends his Son to seek and save that which was lost. Christ is said to gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, denoting his pity and tenderness towards poor sinners; here he is said to bear them upon his shoulders, denoting the power wherewith he supports and bears them up; those can never perish whom he carries upon his shoulders."

Today, Jesus is still seeking to restore anyone who is lost. Have you strayed from your relationship with the Lord? One of the clear indications of your desperate spiritual condition is brought out by this story. The first obvious symptom is wandering away from the flock of God. The Holy Spirit is fulfilling the role of the Shepherd in today's world. He can go anywhere, and will show up at the most unexpected times, in order to bring us out of our destructive lifestyles that "wandering" inevitably leads to. His role is to chase us down, convict us of our sin, convince us of his love for us, and gently "carry us" back to His house. If you find yourself wandering in the "wilderness" or maybe incapacitated at the bottom of some spiritual chasm, be encouraged, I think the Shepherd has been looking for you, He is not far away.

JESUS - MY SHEPHERD TODAY

Heb.13:8 - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, He himself said in John 10:11 - "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep". While Jesus was here on earth He displayed His love for us and was the perfect shepherd of His flock. He provided for His followers, He anointed them for ministry, He healed their bodies, and He taught and guided them with His word. In heaven Jesus is also our Shepherd. In the book of Revelations it describes the heavenly work of our Good Shepherd, Rev.1:16-18 - "They will no longer hunger nor thirst, nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes".

Today, Jesus is my shepherd. He still leads us every day by His word. Jn.10:27 - "My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me". He also feeds us with His heavenly manna. Col.3:16 - "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God". He also anoints our heads with His oil. Matt.3:11 - "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire". Our Shepherd also brings us by the still cool waters for rest and refreshing. Matt.11:28 - "Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest". Jesus told us He would not abandon us as orphans but He would comfort us, wiping away our tears of sorrow - Jn.14:16 - "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever"...

Jesus is always the same, He never changes. What He did in the past and what He promises for the future He is also doing today. Look to Him, depend on Him like a sheep depends on a shepherd. He will lead you into His green pastures of abundance and cause you to lie down by the cool stream of rest and refreshing. Jesus is my Shepherd today and everyday.

THE SHEPHERD

MERRY MONDAY BY PARRIS BAILEY

"I lay down my life for the sheep, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10:15

The month before Hurricane Katrina hit our city, Frank and I traveled to Bulgaria to preach. Little did I realize what would happen 30 days later. But while in Bulgaria I had a very touching experience that would carry me through Katrina and beyond. We had just eaten lunch up in the mountains and were making our way back down into town traveling through quaint little villages. It was as if I was being transported into another world-everything seemed to stand out to me in a vivid way. The sunflowers were in full bloom, the sun was bright and beautiful and to my amazement I saw this shepherd. His face was filled with ruggedness and yet joyfulness and he seemed to look right at me. Right then I felt this intense warmth come upon me, communicating that "everything would be alright". His sheep were all around him. He wore shepherd garb from head to toe- and the years upon his face did him well. All I can say is I will never forget that Shepherd. I knew that the Lord was my shepherd and He will be our guide all through our life until the end. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Everyday when we wake up he will satisfy us to the utmost. When we follow him we don't have to worry about others doing us harm. Yes-indeed!

Spurgeon said, "The Good Shepherd does not stint his sheep, but he gives them so much, that they lie down amid the exceeding plenty of the green pastures. They cannot eat it all, and they lie down in the midst of a superabundance, which infinite mercy has provided. See, then, how God's boundless love piles mountain upon mountain, that we, up from the depths of our distress, may climb to the heights of his blessedness, and enjoy the fullness of the glory which God has treasured up for us in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord."

Slowly the good Shepherd wins the confidence of the soul. He patiently waits for us as if he rescued us from an animal shelter! Grace works upon our hearts and cements us to Christ all the days of our lives. Do we listen for His voice? Do we accept the good things along with the bad? All I have to do is close my eyes and see that Shepherd standing there with his sheep, day

after day. He watches over me and guides through the great maze of life. The shepherd Christ has gone before us and will watch over you. All we have to do is follow him all the days of our life.

DISCUSSION

MAKE IT PERSONAL!

1. Discuss how the Good Shepherd has watched over your life.

“In short, His coming to earth as the Christ, as Jesus of Nazareth, was a straightforward case of utter self-sacrifice that culminated in the cross of Calvary. The laid-down life, the poured-out blood were the supreme symbols of total selflessness. This was love. This was God. This was divinity in action, delivering men from their own utter selfishness, their own stupidity, their own suicidal instincts as lost sheep unable to help themselves.” -Phillip Keller

GATE - KEEPER

Jn.10:7-9 - So Jesus went over it again, “I speak to you eternal truth: I am the Gate for the flock. All those who broke in before me are thieves who came to steal, but the sheep never listened to them. I am the Gateway. To enter through me is to experience life, freedom, and satisfaction.”

One of the first things I realized as a new Christian was how many voices there were out there trying to get me to go a different direction. Before I came to Christ I was never aware of all the different religious voices that were out there. When I met the Shepherd for myself the wolves started to gather around. I remember having conversations with members of a cult called the Children of God in those early days. They were following a false teacher by the name of David Moses. Then of course there was the Jehovah Witnesses trying to convince me that Jesus was not really God Himself. Then there were the Mormons with their special scrolls only to be read with the special glasses that their prophet had found. The funniest of all was the "Jesus only" people that were desperately trying to get me to cut my hair and “get a bath”. I guess they felt all hippies had hygiene issues. Thankfully this scripture was true, the “Gatekeeper” kept my heart from deception and kept me safe in His flock. Here is how Brian Simmons describes this passage:

“A sheep pen was an enclosure with walls and no roof that would often have the sheep of an entire village kept within. After the sheep were brought in for the night, it was common for the shepherd to sleep at the entrance so he could protect his sheep. Only the shepherds of the sheep would be recognized by that gatekeeper. Jesus is the one who will remain with his flock and keep his sheep living in peace and safety. His teaching (voice) will guard us from the unreliable teachers who want to steal our hearts and bind us to themselves. They steal and rob the affection that belongs only to Jesus, our kind shepherd.”

Almost fifty years have come and gone since I first came to Christ. He has watched over me faithfully for all these years. I suppose the scripture is absolutely true, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”.

“I know of nothing which so stimulates my faith in my Heavenly Father as to look back and reflect on His faithfulness to me in every crisis and every chilling circumstance of life. Over and over He has proved His care and concern for my welfare. gain and again I have been conscious of the Good Shepherd’s guidance through dark days and deep valleys.”- Phillip Keller

I AM THE DOOR

Jn. 10:9 - I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

Recently the Lord spoke to our church about an open door He had set before us. To be even more clear, in today’s verse Jesus tells us that He Himself is that door. He is the open door for everything that pertains to life for us. This verse speaks to us about the open door to salvation, entering into life itself. It tells us of the open door into His pasture of nourishment. This door leads us to a place of spiritual nourishment feasting on God through His written word. It also tells us about a place of protection, we are kept safe from the spiritual thieves and robbers that try to bring us back into some version of slavery. This is also the door into the community, the local church, where we experience life among all of His sheep. Here are some thoughts from Matthew Henry on today’s verse.

“Christ is the door of the sheep, if any man enter into the sheepfold, as one of the flock, he shall be saved; shall not only be safe from thieves and robbers, but he shall be happy, he shall go in and out. First, Plain directions how to come into the fold: we must come in by Jesus Christ as the door. By faith in him, as the great Mediator between God and man, we come into covenant and communion with God. There is no entering into God’s church but by coming into Christ’s church; nor are any looked upon as members of the kingdom of God among men but those that are willing to submit to the grace and government of the Redeemer. We must now enter by the door of faith... Secondly, Precious promises to those who observe this direction. They shall be saved hereafter; this is the privilege of their home. These sheep shall be saved from being distrained and impounded by divine justice for trespass done, satisfaction being made for the damage by their great Shepherd, saved from being a prey to the roaring lion; they shall be for ever happy.”

I spent years trying to find my way into life some other way. Let me say this emphatically, there is no other way. Jesus is the only door that leads to life. You won’t find it in

new age meditation, secular education, or experimentation with the pleasures of this world. Christ alone is the Door who leads us into life.

“It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways. ...Our mass mind (or mob instincts), our fears and timidity, our stubbornness and stupidity, our perverse habits are all parallels of profound importance. Yet despite these adverse characteristics Christ has chooses us, buys us, calls us by name, makes us His own and delights in caring for us.” -Phillip Keller

DISCUSSION

1. Why is it so important for everyone to go through the door?
2. Discuss “I am the door”.

REAL LIFE

Jn.10:10 - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly.

As Jesus drew nearer and nearer to the cross and His return to be with the Father, He began to unveil more and more about His true mission. In this short phrase, Jesus comes out and says it, “I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly”. The reason Jesus came to this earth was to give us abundant life. Many times people don’t quite understand what Jesus was talking about. The non-spiritual person would have a wrong definition of what abundant life includes. The list would vary from person to person, but it would include things like a healthy marriage and family, good health, and abundant provision. Now of course all of those things are good and are the blessings of the Lord, but that is not what Jesus is talking about or why He came. He came to give life; Zoe. Zoe is the very essence of the life that the Father and the Son enjoy. Life is the very nature of God, and the very thing we lost at the fall so many years ago. Here is how Barclay describes this passage.

“But John is quite sure that, although Jesus is the bringer of this life, the giver of life is God. Again and again, John uses the phrase the living God, as indeed the whole Bible does. It is the will of the Father who sent Jesus that everyone who sees him and believes in him should have life (6:40). Jesus is the giver of life because the Father has set his own seal of approval upon him (6:27). He gives life to as many as God has given him (17:2). At the back of it all, there is God. It is as if God was saying: ‘I created human beings that they should have real life; through their sin they have ceased to live and only exist; I have sent them my Son to enable them to know what real life is.’”

When Christ comes into your life, you pass from death into life; the very life of God. He Himself is your abundant life. Jesus came to give us access to Himself; that is the abundant life Jesus preached about and the life all of us long for. Open your heart to Him, and let His real life fill every part of your being.

ABUNDANT LIFE

Jn.10:10 - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly.

This passage has been quoted and mis-quoted for many, many years. It has been used to reinforce people's doctrine and personal idea of what kind of life Christ came to provide. This is not a new problem, it actually existed in the inner circle of the Lord's disciples. You remember the confrontation between Mary and Judas? Judas was looking for an earthly kingdom with earthly power and blessing. Mary had seen something quite different. She felt that Christ had come to bring life. He came to bring abundant life. I guess the only way to get to the bottom of this is for you to define abundant life for yourself. What is an abundant life? I say it is the very life that Jesus enjoys with the Father. It is not defined by houses, cars, or possessions. It is a quality of life that we receive only by the Holy Spirit. You have to be born again into this abundant life. Here is how Matthew Henry described it:

“That they might have it more abundantly, kai perisson echosin. As we read it, it is comparative, that they might have a life more abundant than that which was lost and forfeited by sin, more abundant than that which was promised by the law of Moses, length of days in Canaan, more abundant than could have been expected or than we are able to ask or think. But it may be construed without a note of comparison, that they might have abundance, or might have it abundantly. Christ came to give life and perisson ti—something more, something better, life with advantage; that in Christ we might not only live, but live comfortably, live plentifully, live and rejoice. Life in abundance is eternal life, life without death or fear of death, life and much more.”

I love the way Henry describes this phrase, life more abundantly. He says it like this, “something more, something better, life with advantage; that in Christ we might not only live, but live comfortably, live plentifully, live and rejoice”. So Jesus came to give us something more- life with advantage. This is a superior quality of life- the life of God in the soul of man. This is why Jesus came, to give us life and that more abundantly.

LIFE WITH ADVANTAGE

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. John 10:10

What kind of life did Jesus come to give us? Of course this life, this abundant life, that Jesus purchased for us with His blood, effects every other part of our lives. Some may think that Christ purchased just a ticket to heaven, not hardly. He purchased a different quality of life for us. It starts with access to Him which fills our being with the life of a God. This life is sweeter and completely satisfying. But there is even more, this resurrection life effects everything else that pertains to us. It effects our body, our relationships, and even our finances. Like Abraham, every place our foot treads begins to be effected. Here is how Matthew Henry described this abundant life.

“Life is inclusive of all good, and stands in opposition to the death threatened; that we might have life, as a criminal has when he is pardoned, as a sick man when he is cured, a dead man when he is raised; that we might be justified, sanctified, and at last glorified. That they might have it more abundantly. As we read it, it is comparative, that they might have a life more abundant than that which was lost and forfeited by sin, more abundant than that which was promised by the law of Moses, length of days in Canaan, more abundant than could have been expected or than we are able to ask or think. But it may be construed without a note of comparison, that they might have abundance, or might have it abundantly. Christ came to give life and—something more, something better, life with advantage; that in Christ we might not only live, but live comfortably, live plentifully, live and rejoice. Life in abundance is eternal life, life without death or fear of death, life and much more.”

I like what Henry said, we now have a life of advantage. Our business endeavors carry the blessing of God. Our talents are enhanced so that we become more productive. Rather than living under a curse waiting for the next shoe to fall, our lives are blessed. The Lord goes before us as our Shepherd, as a result we will not lack.

DISCUSSION

1. Thought provokingdo we really believe and live that Christ gives us abundant life?