

It's Not All About Me

January 27, 2008

(4th in the series on ***Growing Deeper in Your Faith***)

Over the last three weeks we have been talking about the importance of growing deeper in our faith. Growth starts with examining the person God has intended us to be through the Word found in the Holy Scriptures. Our faith grows as we seek God through worship and prayer and lastly, growth continues as we bear fruit for Christ.

Today we examine the cross of Christ. As fully developing followers of Christ, Jesus invites us to take up our cross and follow Him. The most difficult step for us is to give up self for Christ. As 21st century Christians, full sacrificial living for Christ seems to have no meaning. Our sacrifice seems in vane for a materialistic society. But as we mature in Christ, we realize that genuine living, true significance, and authentic purpose is found only by giving ourselves completely to the one who has first sacrificed for us.

John 14: 5-6

This verse is part of a much larger address by Jesus called the farewell discourse. (John 13:31-16:33). We find the gospel of John more personal than the other Gospels in the manner in which he deals with the words of Jesus. The discourse deals with the imminent departure of Jesus, the fate of his disciples, and his return. Jesus speaks to both the danger of the present and the promise of the future. The disciples will falter; Peter will deny him; and they do not understand his words or identity. They will scatter in fear, but will be brought back together through the promise of the resurrection to witness unto death. In tribulation they will find joy. The suffering of Jesus will be their suffering – His victory will be their victory.

Thomas interrupts Jesus with the question, "How shall we know the way?" (vs. 5) Jesus has been showing the disciples the way all along their journey together. Thomas' literalism has closed his eyes to the possibilities of the Son of God. Jesus gives a spiritual answer that will be understood later. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through me." The latter two ideas are introduced in John 1: 1-18 (truth and life). In this passage, truth and life could also be translated as adjectives to describe and identify the "way" of Jesus. As such the translation could read, "**I am the true and living way.**"

Jesus clearly states his uniqueness as the Son of God with the phrase, "no one comes to the Father except through me." Nowhere else do we hear this divine willingness to serve as a bridge for humanity in our estrangement from God. To follow Christ is to give ourselves up for Him. By this sacrifice we find victory through the true and living way of Christ.

Please note: The following daily readings allow you to study other passages that speak to the place of scripture in our lives. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper. You are invited to use the hymn "Take My Life and Let it Be" (Hymn 399) as your theme for this week. Read it (or better); sing it each morning as you begin your day.

Monday – Read Romans 5:1-11. In Paul's letter to the Roman church, this passage is the defining passage for our life with Christ. "While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." (Verse 6) Use this passage as a guide for your day. Spend the day thanking God for Christ's redeeming love. Write it down, and carry it with you throughout your day.

Tuesday – Read Galatians 5:22-26. Memorize the fruit of the spirit. "... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." In what ways are you exhibiting this fruit in your life? Ask God to give you these gifts each day. Christ is ready to use you as a voice and witness for the Kingdom. What is your most visible fruit of the spirit?

Wednesday – Read Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus challenges his disciples with a vision of the last days. Here God separates the faithful from the unfaithful by the measure of their response to those in need. In this vision, Christ comes as the one disadvantaged and hurting. Where is Christ in your life? When you go about your day are you looking for Christ among you? Before you go to bed, pray for that person you met today who showed you the greatest pain.

Thursday – Read John 6:1-14. Do you believe in miracles? Do you believe in the power of God through Christ to use a heart felt sacrifice for great work in this world? In this passage, Jesus used the lunch of a youth to feed 5,000 families. Pray for God's will and strength that you might hear and respond to God's call in your life.

Friday – Read Matthew 11:25-29. Jesus not only challenged his disciples, but often offered them support, strength and rest. "Come to me, all of you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." As your week comes to a close, ask God for help in carrying the burdens in your life. Jesus truly is the true and living way.

Have a great week!

See you next Sunday, February 3 and then on February 7, as we begin a new series called **Heroes**. The first sermon is **Heroes: A Great Crowd of Witnesses**, uses Hebrews 12:1-2 as a starting place for our journey. In this series we will examine how God uses the ordinary person of faith for an extraordinary life.