



RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

THE WEEKLY BRICK

May 30, 2010.

As you come to him, the living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. - 1 Peter 2:4-5

Sunday, May 30th 2010

May/June Sermon Series: “Mission: Possible”

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come

“I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith.” (Martin Luther. Luther’s Small Catechism. This is Martin Luther’s explanation of the third article of the Apostles Creed).

The Holy Spirit _____ the believer

The Spirit will always...

Call us towards _____

Call us towards _____

Call us towards _____

Our Response: Discipleship (Some definitions)

Disciple: Greek: *mathetes*, “A learner, pupil, apprentice.” A Disciple: “A person who day by day surrenders to the divine call and through the Spirit, learns to live his or her life as Jesus would live it.”

Discipleship: “The Jesus-led, transformational path shared with other disciples, which focuses on particular Christian practices that train disciples to obey Jesus and love others.”

“Christian Formation:” “The Spirit driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Jesus himself... This is focused entirely on Jesus.” (Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 22)

Discipleship: The “S.O.U.L. L. Path.”

Surrender to God’s Love...

Obediently Hear and Respond to Jesus...

Unity with Others in Biblical Community...

Learning through Loss...

Loving God’s World...

Surrender to God’s Love

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual^[a] act of worship.

WORSHIP is _____ to God's love.

WORSHIP is _____ to God.

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Some other considerations about surrendering your life:

- Following God's lead without knowing where he's sending you...
- Waiting for God's timing without knowing when it will come...
- Expecting a miracle without knowing how God will provide...
- Trusting God's purpose without understanding the circumstances...

(Answers: Calls, Truth, Hope, Jesus, Responding, Giving.)

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

☐ Day #1--Monday, May 31st Read: Romans 8:5-8; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 6:6-15.

This week, we will explore the first "step" in the S.O.U.L.L. Path, surrendering to God through a lifestyle of worship.

Remember the first time you fell in love? You probably couldn't get that person off your mind. You thought about them when you woke up in the morning and you thought about them before you went to sleep. You thought about them all day long. God, the Bible tells us, has a love for us that is eternal. God is always focused on us and He wants to teach us to focus our heart and our attention on Him. That's difficult sometimes. It is difficult to focus on God. Honestly, one the easiest thing to do in life is to lose our focus. In truth, we are constantly deciding what to focus on throughout the day. We also decide sometimes to not focus on something or someone—a boss, a difficult relationship, and even God. How do we keep our focus on God? It begins by confessing to God and ourselves that we are very easily distractable. In fact, there are two rather huge issues that distract us from focusing our attention on God. First, we're self-centered by nature.

Second, we live in a self-centered culture where we are bombarded with messages that the individual is the measure of all reality. Consequently, we need to establish a regular time to focus on God. We can do this by establishing a daily time with God. It can be as little as a few minutes during the day or as much as an hour in the morning, mid-day, or evening. When we do it does not matter as much as doing it! What we can do is to stop, quiet ourselves, talk to God, and read His word. Jesus encourages us to pray and even provides us a prayer: the Lord's Prayer. In the Old Testament there was only one place where you could worship God. It was called the Temple. You had to make a journey there to worship God and focus on God. This is no longer the situation. You can worship God anywhere at any time. In the Romans passage, as we recognize all (the word 'mercy' is plural in the Greek) that God has done for us in his Son, as Paul has surveyed it in chapters 1–11, we realize that offering ourselves to God *as living sacrifices* is, indeed, a 'reasonable,' Greek, *logikēn* (see the English word, logical) act of worship. The word *living* reminds us of what God has made us: we are people who are now 'alive to God in Christ Jesus' (6:11)

What is required is nothing less than a total transformation in world-view. No longer are we to look at life in terms of *this world*, (we are in fact, called out of this world) the realm of sin and death from which we have been transferred by God's power (see Romans 5:12–21), but in terms of the new realm to which we belong, the realm ruled by righteousness, life and the Spirit. Living in the world, we are nevertheless no longer 'of the world' (John 17:15–16). The essence of faithful Christian discipleship is the *renewing* of our minds so that we might be able to *approve what God's will is*—that is, to recognize and put into practice God's will for every situation we face. God has given us His Spirit, who is working to change our hearts and minds from within (regeneration), so that our obedience to God might be natural and spontaneous.

Question/Reflect: Do you have a time during the day where you can focus on God?

□ Day #2--Tuesday, June 1st Read: 1 John 4:17-19; Hosea 6:6

Worship is our response to God. God created you to love you. Here is the other side of that truth: You were created to love God in return. When we worship we are loving God back and praising God for His grace, mercy, and truth. God “risked” giving to us what love requires: freedom. We are free to either love or reject God. However, whether for those who love God or reject God, God said “I love you” first. God has said it in a thousand ways: He created you; He’s taken care of you even when you didn’t know it! The most important thing we can know in life is that God loves you. The second most important thing you can do in life is love God back. Maybe, when you get up every morning before you get out of bed sit on the edge of your bed and say something like this: “God, if I don’t get anything else done today at the end of this day I want to know You a little bit better and I want to love You a little bit more.” If you do that, at the end of your day no matter how bad the day has gone, no matter how many plans fell apart if at the end of the day you know God a little bit better and you love Him a little bit more, that day was a success. Praise flows from the lips of those who know that all we have is from a loving Father and He is in control. This is what Max Lucado writes:

“Praise is the highest occupation of any being. What happens when we praise the Father? We reestablish the proper chain of command; we recognize that the King is on the throne and that He has saved His people.”

God has saved us! God had told us that He would never leave us! God promises that His love will last forever! What work does God want you to do to receive these promises? Nothing. Accept them and just love Him back. Also, one important point; In 1 John 4:19 we are told that we are able to love God and others because He first loved us. Our capacity to know love, give love, and receive love, is a reflection of God’s image within us. Henri Nouwen once said that all human love was but a “shadow” of God’s love for us from the foundation of the world.

□ Day #3--Wednesday, June 2nd Read: Deuteronomy 10:12; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Revelation 4:11.

Why did God create you? To love you! You were created for God’s pleasure. When God formed you in your mother’s womb God smiled and couldn’t wait for you to grow and love Him back. Today, we look at three Biblical affirmations of why you are here on this earth.

1. You were created because God wants to love you. God wants to have a personal relationship with you! See Ephesians 1:4.
2. God has a plan for your life. God has created you with certain spiritual gifts, talents, and abilities. Part of living is discovering and learning what God has put you on this earth to do. One thing is certain, it always involves others. See 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.
3. You were made to last forever. This life is not our only level of existence. We will either live eternally with God or eternally separated from God. Rick Warren, in his book *The Purpose Driven Life*, says, “Life on earth is just the dress rehearsal before the real production. You will spend far more time on the other side of death-in eternity- than you will here...This life is preparation for the next.” See Ecclesiastes 3:11. When you remember these three truths, life takes on a whole new focus. You want to worship!

Question/Reflect: God put me here on this earth because He wants to love me!

□ Day #4--Thursday, June 3rd Read: Exodus 34:10-14; Romans 5:1-5

What holds us back from worshipping God with joy and abandon? Why do we not give our lives completely to God? Likely, one word: Fear. “I might become one of those fanatics I see on some of those TV channels” someone might confess. God doesn’t want to turn you into an inauthentic goofball! God made you to be you. You may be an introvert or extrovert, like routine or like variety. If you do not embrace who God made you to be, thank and praise God for who He made you to be, you miss a huge piece of discipleship formation. The glory of God is a human being fully alive. The more you know God and the more you love God the more normal you become. The more you become what God meant for you to be in the first place.

If we really knew how much God is passionate about every detail of our lives I think we would be overwhelmed and surrender immediately! How could I not love a God like that? When we begin to realize God’s immense love, worship is always the response. We love God because He first loved us. When we understand that Jesus loved us enough to even

come to earth and die on a cross for us, we are able to surrender: “Ok God, because you love me so much I surrender myself to You; My soul is in Your hands.”

Loving God also brings hope. The hope of a believer is centered in God and His promises. Therefore, Christian hope does not “disappoint.” The sense of the word disappoint in Romans 5:5, means to be put to shame because of unfulfilled promises. The reason this hope (resulting finally from affliction) does not disappoint is that God’s love, so abundant in believer’s hearts, encourages Christians in their hope. This divine love is poured out *through* (Greek, “*dia*” with the genitive = “*through*”) the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the divine Agent who expresses to a believer the love of God, that is, God’s love for him. The reality of God’s love in a believer’s heart gives the assurance, even the guarantee that the believer’s hope in God and His promise of glory is not misplaced and will not fail. This ministry of the Holy Spirit, which we explored on Sunday, is related to His presence in believers as the seal of God (Ephesians 4:30) and as the earnest or down payment of their inheritance in glory (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14).

Question/Reflect: How much of your life have you surrendered to Jesus? What are you holding back? How is your hope these days?

□ **Day #5--Friday, June 4th Read:** Psalm 37:7; Romans 6:13

Surrendering to God is a daily decision. We will know we have surrendered to God when we rely on God to work things out instead of trying to manipulate others, force our agenda, and/or control the situation. We don’t have to always be in charge. Instead of trying harder we trust more. We can trust we have surrendered when we don’t react to criticism and rush to defend ourselves. Surrendered hearts show up best in relationships. We are not self-serving and we don’t edge others out. The most difficult thing for many people to surrender is their money. Jesus said, “You cannot serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:24), and “Wherever your treasure is, your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). The supreme example of self-surrender is Jesus. The night before his crucifixion Jesus surrendered himself to God’s plan. He prayed, “Father, everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine” (Mark 14:36). Jesus didn’t pray, “God, if you’re able to take away this pain, please do so.” He began by affirming that God can do anything! He prayed, “God, if it is in your best interest to remove this suffering, please do so. But if it fulfills your purpose, that’s what I want, too.” This level of spiritual maturity doesn’t come easy. This is the reason that discipleship is a life-time process! Surrender is hard work. In our case, it requires intense warfare against our self-centered nature. This warfare is the Spirit’s work of re-generation of the human heart.

□ **Day #6--Saturday, June 5th Read:** Matthew 22:34-40; Revelation 4:9-11

We worship and show our love for God in many ways. Today, we will look at three ways we can love God. First, God wants me to love Him *thoughtfully*. The Bible tells us to love God with our minds, our intellect. In other words, He wants us to think about Him and remember all that He has done for us. God wants us to worship Him thoughtfully and to know and love Him thoughtfully. Second, God wants us to love Him *passionately*. Jesus says that we should love God with all our heart and with all our soul. Our culture has almost ruined the word, passion, equating passion with sexuality alone. Biblical passion is the decision of the lover to enter into another’s life in order to share the other’s life, particularly the suffering of and for the other. God wants us to love Him passionately because He passionately loves us! Third, God desires that we love Him *practically*. Loving God with all of our “strength” means that we love God with our abilities. The truth is that even though God created the universe and He created you, there are three things God does not have unless you give them to Him. God doesn’t have your *attention* unless you give it to Him; this is loving God with your *mind*. God doesn’t have your *affection* unless you give it to Him; this is loving God with your *heart* and your *soul*. God doesn’t have your *ability* unless you give it to Him; this is loving God with your *strength*. Whenever you take the things God has given you and give them back to God that is the heart of worship.

Question/Reflect: Is there one area (mind, heart, soul, strength) that is more natural for you when it comes to loving and worshiping God? How can you develop the areas where you are weaker?

