

02/06/11

Living Life Together in the Joy of Our Redemption

- is it possible for a person to be around a church, and learn biblical principles and maybe even apply them to a certain degree...without living in a way that is truly Christ-centered?...
 - for example, let's take the four rules of communication from Ephesians chapter 4...
 - if you've been around our church for any period of time, you know them...
 - but should we view verses like that as isolated steps in a recipe from a cookbook...
 - or as principles from a novel that can only be fully appreciated and applied if they are viewed in light of the over-arching storyline of God's Word?
- now I realize that's a mouthful...or a head-full...so let's break it down...
 - the four rules of communication...be honest, keep current, attack the problem not the person, act don't react...
 - is the goal here simply that we write those four rules down on an index card, go over them until we have them memorized, and then look for practical ways to apply them each and every day?...
 - now, that's honestly not a trick question...but do you see how you and I could do all of that without any thought to the person and work of Christ?...
 - without considering at all the context of the Person and work of our Redeemer that is so beautifully laid out in the book of Ephesians prior to these practical verses on communication being given?...
 - in other words, we would be trying to communicate biblically but in a way that results in Jesus Christ being nowhere present...
 - I have the opportunity each week to provide supervision for people who are learning to do biblical counseling and one of the common mistakes of people just getting started is being satisfied with using the Bible as a cookbook or an encyclopedia of isolated verses or principles...instead of like a novel with a central message which must be understood and considered...
 - I often say to these folks – you talked about this passage and you gave this verse for homework...but where was Jesus?...
 - there were all sorts of principles but where was the Person?...
 - and of course I not only have to say that to them...on a surprising number of occasions, I have to say that...to me...
 - in his book Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands [show pic], Paul Tripp said... In personal ministry, there is often a lot of pressure to handle Scripture topically. Usually, you are talking with someone facing some personal, relational, or situational difficulty. You want to find out what the Bible has to say on the subject and apply it to the person's life. So you get out your concordance or topical Bible, scan all the verses on the topic, pick the passages that seem most relevant, and share them with the struggling person. Unfortunately, you are misunderstanding what the Word is and how it is to be used.

Let's say that you are talking with a wife who is in the midst of an all-out war with her husband. Everything in their lives has become a contest for control. They say remarkably unkind things to each other. He has buried himself in his work, and she has found refuge in her children. They spend time with each other only when duty demands it. What is wrong with this marriage? Would you agree that their problems run deeper than communication, role division, work, parenting, and time management? These issues are the fruit of a much more deeply rooted

set of problems. The surface chaos will only change as the transforming power of the Word is brought to those roots. Anything less will keep the rebellious, foolish, powerless self at the center, unmoved and unchanged.

What the wife wants is a sweeter, more attentive husband. What the husband wants is a kinder, more content wife. These things are not bad, but God wants more for them—more than a better marriage, and more than the spouse of their dreams. Need-driven, self-focused, solution-defined ministry may *use* the Bible, but it is not truly biblical. It distorts what the Bible was meant to do. This error can rob the body of Christ of its vitality and productivity, relegating many true believers to lives of long-term immaturity. We must opt for something better (Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, p. 25).

- that's what we want to talk about this morning...an approach to life and ministry where the Person of our Redeemer is on the center stage of our hearts and lives...
- with that in mind, please open your Bible to Exodus chapter 11 [page 48 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you]...
- our theme this year is **Living Life Together**...
 - we're talking about what it means for us to be a church where it is easy for men and women to feel/be connected...
 - where we're taking steps to becoming the family of God that is so frequently discussed in scripture...living "together with all the saints" as Ephesians 3 so powerfully describes the body of Christ...
- to develop that theme, right now we're studying the book of Exodus because here's a great example of how God was developing His fledgling nation into a body that would be His visible representative on His earth...and we want to extract as many principles as we can from this point in the history of God's people...
- last week we left Moses and the children of Israel still enslaved in Egypt but at the conclusion of the ninth plague...
- God was demonstrating that was Jehovah, I am who I am, the singular God who was both powerful and willing to be personally present with all who would come to Him by faith...
 - and He wanted the world to know that He was the only God and hence believe in Him...
 - so He sets up a showdown between His monotheistic character and the pantheon of Egyptian gods including the Pharaoh himself who was believed to be the incarnate son of Ra, the god of the Sun believed to be responsible for the annual fertility of the entire Nile Valley...whom the people in turn worshipped and adored as central to nature, their economic vitality, and their physical health and pleasure...
- at this point nine plagues have occurred, each demonstrating Jehovah's power and majesty...
 - at first we read repeatedly of the Pharaoh continuing to harden his heart
 - then eventually we read the shocking news that Pharaoh reached the point where God hardened the Pharaoh's heart as part of the judgment on his pride and unbelief...
- the last words we heard from Pharaoh were... **Exodus 10:28-29 - Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!”** Moses said, “You are right; I shall never see your face again!”
- let's pick up the story there...this next short chapter is part of the event we just read about...**read Exodus 11:1-10**...the next verses give instructions for the Passover lamb and a memorial feast of unleavened bread...we'll skip those for sake of time and because they're addressed again in a moment...now please look at chapter 12:21 – **read 12:21-41**
- we're talking this morning about **Living Life Together in the Joy of Our Redemption**...

- with the time we have remaining, let's look for **Three truths to help us understand the centrality of our Passover Lamb.**

I. Be Aware of the Surety of God's Judgment of Sin.

- I recognize that some of what we just read might have been shocking to you...
- that's because many men and women do not have a place in their theology for a God who is holy, and who hates sin, and who at some will most assuredly judge the sin of those who refuse to repent, believe, and obey Him...
- now please don't take this position...well, this is the OT God...I prefer to worship and follow the god of the NT...
- I realize that many people in our culture like to default to that argument, but it simply doesn't stand up to biblical scrutiny...there's plenty of grace in the OT and there's plenty of judgment in the New...
- and we'll see evidence of the truthfulness of both sides of that equation this morning...
- the reason that many people in our culture would have trouble with this passage is that sin for them is something to mock or ridicule...
- so the goal of TV now is to see how far we can push the envelope...or how much we can glorify rebellion and lust and disobedience to God and His Word...
- we're not going to make some sort of legalistic test about this...but this is why unless it is news or sports, I almost never watch TV...why would you want to fill your mind with something that would dull your hatred of sin?...
- that's what Paul meant in **Romans 16:19 - ...I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.**
- that's why this world and all its values and practices should not seem like home to you...you should have reason every day to say in your heart...that's not the way it's supposed to be...it's not funny, it's not cute...its wicked and dishonoring to God...
- the principle is – the more profound your hatred of sin, the more appropriate judgment, at the hand of our holy God, will make sense to you...
- now, what sin is being judged?...

A. Pharaoh's attempted murder of the Israelites' sons.

- the symbolism here cannot be missed...
- **Exodus 1:22 - Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive."**
- and remember, you might have been a Jewish mother or father at that time and thought, where's God?...how could this allowed to happen?...
- and what's the answer – whether a person was asking that then or today about some other injustice in this world?...just wait...don't confuse God not acting with God not knowing...

B. Pharaoh's harsh treatment of the children of Israel.

- **Exodus 5:9 - Let the labor be heavier on the men...**
- **Exodus 5:14 - Moreover, the foremen of the sons of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, "Why have you not completed your required amount either yesterday or today in making brick as previously?"**
- and again, if you were living in the middle of this you might have said – why is God allowing this to happen?...
- or if you were Pharaoh or one of his taskmasters...you might have said – there's certainly no Jehovah because we're doing whatever we want with no consequence

C. Pharaoh's mistaken belief that he was a god.

- there are all sorts of people who make themselves out to be the ultimate authority...
- some husbands do that and justify their abusive words and actions...
- some bosses do that in the workplace...
- **Isaiah 42:8 - I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.**
- that's why it was such a marvelous thing for Joseph to say years before to his brothers who had sold him into slavery which started their sojourn in Egypt...after their father died they assumed Joseph would now take revenge on them...do you remember what he asked?...Am I God?...[you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good...I knew He had a plan even though I had no idea what that plan was...]

D. This is why God's people should not take vengeance themselves.

- do you remember what Paul told the Romans in chapter 12?...
- **Romans 12:19-21 - Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**
- people living a Christ-centered life will leave the timing of God's judgment on others who are abusing them in the hands of their sovereign Redeemer...
- so it's not just overcoming evil with good because that's an effective conflict resolution strategy...its evidence that you truly believe and rejoice in the sovereign plan of your Redeemer who is working all things for your spiritual good and His eternal glory...
- so even in the powerful crucible of suffering, Christ centered people don't take vengeance into their own hands because they believe periods of suffering can actually draw them closer to their Savior and conform them into His image – they know God will make things right in His time and in His way and they are more than satisfied in allowing God to work out His redemptive plan in them...

II. Be Amazed that Your Sin Can Be Passed Over.

- I hope none of us would view this story and immediately think about the sin of everyone else in our lives...
- Our first thought should be on our own sin...and the fact that if God is simply a God of holiness, justice, and righteousness...then we are all in big trouble...
- from our perspective, the spotlight that identifies sin goes down on everyone else and shines directly on us...
- that's why the thought of a Passover becomes so incredibly delicious...
- Jehovah is revealing Himself as a God of grace, and mercy, and forgiveness...

A. While God's holiness demands a price, God's mercy offers a payment.

- this is one of those places where how the Bible all fits together into a marvelous story of redemption through the finished work of Christ comes screaming out in living Technicolor...
- do you remember after the resurrection of Jesus that he met with 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus...
- and they were lamenting the fact that they had hoped Jesus would be the Messiah but that He had been crucified...and then they even said...besides all of this...it's the third day since these things have happened...

- Luke 24:25-27 - And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

- did you hear that?...in all the Scriptures...

- when you compare the specific details of the Passover lamb with what happened when Jesus was crucified, it absolutely takes your breath away...

1. The Passover lamb was to be selected on the tenth day of Nisan (Exodus 12:3)

- Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Nissan 10) (Luke 19:36-38).

- Exodus 12:3 - Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers’ households, a lamb for each household.

- Luke 19:37 - As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen,

- our Lord was the only person who understood the significance of that moment...

2. The Passover lamb was then observed for four days (Exodus 12:5-6) – Jesus sat in the courtyard and taught for four days, being examined by the religious and secular leaders with no blemish being found in Him (Matthew 22:23-33, John 18:38).

- Exodus 12:5-6 - Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month...

- John 18:38 – Pilate...went out again to the Jews and said to them, “I find no guilt in Him.”

3. The Passover lamb was killed “at twilight” (Ex. 12:6 - literally “between the two evenings” – the minor evening oblation was from 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm and the major evening oblation was from 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm) – twilight was 3:00 pm – Jesus died on Nisan 14 at 3:00 pm (Matthew 27:45-50)

- Exodus 12:6 - You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.

- Matthew 27:46-50 - About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”...And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

- think about how amazed the children of Israel must have been that their sin was being passed over not because of their inherent goodness – but because of the power of their faith in the provision God had made for them...

- and of course we know in complete detail what they only saw in the shadows...that all of this pointing to the death, burial, and resurrection of God's own dear Son...which is why the apostle Peter would one day say...1 Peter 1:18-19 - knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ*.

- and that means this...

B. Our message is not simply a plan of redemption but a relationship with a personal Redeemer.

- everything that was unfolding during this historic event was pointing to a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who stands ready to redeem us and change us into His image...
- and understanding that story-line is what empowers our attempts to obey individual principles from His Word...
 - for example, a husband can become frustrated if he's trying to love his wife when he really doesn't feel it...his attempts to do so become shallow and fruitless...
 - but if he sees that aspect of his role in light of a personal relationship with a Redeemer who will give Him the power to fulfill that command, and who will conform him into the image of the one who loves perfectly and completely in the process, and who offers a personal relationship with that husband so he does not have to fulfill that command alone...
 - now it's more than an isolated principle...its part of a comprehensive plan...
 - Paul Tripp also said,

- The sad fact is that many of us are simply not biblical in the way we use the Bible!

Being biblical does not mean merely quoting words from within its pages. Being truly biblical means that my counsel reflects what the entire Bible is about. The Bible is a narrative, a story of redemption, and its chief character is Jesus Christ. *He is the main theme of the narrative, and he is revealed in every passage in the book.* The story reveals how God harnessed nature and controlled history to send his Son to rescue rebellious, foolish, and self-focused men and women. He freed them from bondage to themselves, enabled them to live for his glory, and gifted them with an eternity in his presence, far from the harsh reality of the Fall...

- It is because our sin problem is so pervasive and so deeply ingrained that we need more from Scripture than insight, principles, understanding, or direction. An encyclopedic, problem-solving approach to Scripture is totally inadequate for the true depth of our need. We need something that will change us from the inside out—we need Christ. Only his person and work can free us from our slavery to self and our tendency to deify the creation. Only as we see our story enfolded in the larger story of redemption will we begin to live God-honoring lives.

- now, I would be remiss if at some point of this study I did not ask every person here – has there ever been a definite time in your life where you once and for all allowed the blood of Jesus Christ to forgive you for your sin and bring into a personal relationship with God?...
- and I realize that someone might say – but I'm not sure I like the idea of a God who judges sin the way we've studied here this am...
- the truth is – we will all face God one way or the other...either as our Savior or our judge...
- and we have access to much more truth than the Egyptians ever had...
- that's why the writer of Hebrews said...**Hebrews 10:26-31 - For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled**

under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.” And again, “THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- that's what motivates our ministry -- **2 Corinthians 5:11 - Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...**
- now let me ask you this...to what end?...
 - what does God want to produce in and through people whose sin has been positionally forgiven?

C. A positional Passover prepares us to live an “unleavened life” individually and corporately.

- this event not only resulted in the feast of the Passover, but also the feast in unleavened bread...that is a major theme in this section of Scripture...
- Paul in speaking about holiness in the church, made a very important allusion to all of this...
- **1 Corinthians 5:7-8 - Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**
 - this is a critical aspect of Living Life Together...
 - we are certainly not perfect people, but we are serious about providing mutual accountability as we seek to grow together in Christ...
 - that means confronting one another...that makes practicing church discipline when necessary...
 - that means allowing our Redeemer to do the hard work of transforming us into His image as individuals and as a church...
 - [develop – the ways that has happened this year....]

II. Be Looking for Ways to Remind Yourself of Our Precious Redeemer.

- God wanted his people to institute special feasts to remind themselves of His redeeming grace...
- **Exodus 12:26-27 - And when your children say to you, ‘What does this rite mean to you?’ you shall say, ‘It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.’ ” And the people bowed low and worshiped.**

A. Church family nights

B. Daily reminders and conversations