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Order of Worship for 3/11/12
Order of Worship for March 18th, John 6:60-7:9, “Despised and Rejected by Men”

Pre-service Song:

Welcome and Announcements:

Ministry Moment: Missions (I wonder if we could have Betty Braun intro the Walk for Life)

Call to Worship: Psalm 111 and Prayer

Entering the Lord’s Presence in Song: (I am leaving this open for Kari Walden to select)

Offering and Offertory

Special Music:

Message: “Despised and Rejected by Men” (John 6:60-7:9)
[the core teaching of the message is our need to stand fast with the Lord even if and when we are abandoned by all others, as Jesus was even as early as in the days following the feeding of the 5000.]

Closing Songs: (to be selected by Kari Walden)

Parting Word of Grace

Sunday Evenings in the Word
Special presentation by Richard Nakamura, missionary to Japan
6:30-7:30 pm
[I think this is right, but check with the Hurts!]

“The Prayer Closet”

March 18, 2012

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying that:

1. **Joel and Virginia Cook, our own AWANA Missionaries:** Pray for safe travel around the north state conducting Awana events. We are scheduled to be in Napa, Eureka, Arcata, Fort Dick and Vacaville for new club starts and Awana events as well as several local club visits. In April Kristina is traveling out for Matt’s graduation and women’s retreat
2. **President Obama:** the Lord will both comfort and confront him with the majesty, purity, wisdom and goodness of God; the Spirit will impart the needed wisdom to preserve world peace in the face of Iranian and other threats
3. **Youth Ministries:** Praise the Lord for Ken’s quick healing and many projects and funds for the **Mexico Mission** trip; pray that both students and adult staff will bond into a spiritually vital and joyful team; pray for John Ballantyne as he prepares the students leading the trip’s devotionals
4. **Military or Public Service Personnel of the Week: Larry Dunn, State Patrol Agent** (husband of Tina) That God help keep a protective hedge around Larry and his law enforcement partners as they work; and the Holy Spirit will give them wisdom and perseverance in their efforts to make our community safer
5. **Young Adult of the Week: Lisa Gaston at CSUC, Chico:** for peace about where to go for grad school and for summer plans to work out

The title for today’s message in our continuing discussion of John’s Gospel is “Despised and Rejected by Men”. You probably recognize [those words] if you are familiar with the Easter season in particular and Isaiah’s prophecies in description of Jesus Christ. We are going to be looking at that today, the early expression or the early experience of Jesus being despised and rejected. Often times we understandably associate that with the moment of His crucifixion and the terrible trials that preceded it. But Jesus was despised and rejected long before He arrived at that final week. We will be looking at that today, the passage in particular [is] John’s Gospel 6:60-79. We will begin by reading the passage:

“When many of his disciples heard it, they said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?’ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, ‘Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.’ (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, ‘This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.’ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, ‘Do you want to go away as well?’ Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.’ Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.’ He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.”

“After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now the Jews’ Feast of Booths was at hand. So his brothers said to him, ‘Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works that you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.’ For not even his brothers believed in him.” Jesus said to them, ‘My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.’ After saying this, he remained in Galilee.”

By way of reminder, the statement in verse 60 that said, “this is a hard saying”, just so you recall where we were before, Jesus’s statement is that a person has to eat His flesh and drink His blood if they are going to have any hope in life and receive eternal life on the last day. That is a hard saying. For us hearing that – how do you respond to that? It is repugnant; it is repulsive. It offends our sensibilities. But if you were a Jew and you heard those words it would be far more offensive. For it would offend your deepest religious convictions coming right straight out of the Law of God.

In this section of John 6 Jesus is not dealing with the elite, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. He has dealt with them. He has actually moved [on from them] and He is dealing now with the crowd, the multitude that tended to follow after Him. The Pharisees prided themselves on their mastery of the Law, their earned righteousness by carefully keeping all of the rituals of observance and being ceremonially clean. That was very important for them. [But] that was not possible for the multitude. The Pharisees, when they dealt with Jesus, were asking this question: “Who are you compared to us?” You may have met people like this. “I don’t need to be saved; I lead a very good life. I’m certain that when I stand before God and He looks over my life He will see there is a considerable balance in favor of my having been a good and upstanding and a fundamentally honest person, and God will certainly let me in.” With such people as that you feel like, “O man!” But that is not the way the multitude in those days tended to think. What we hear as Jesus is dialoguing with this multitude is that they are looking at Jesus and saying, “What can you do for me?”

Listening to Jesus’ response we realize that the following by the multitude after Him was not from personal conviction regarding His standing with God, or His spiritual authority. Rather the crowd is following Jesus because

they hope to gain personal benefits. This is very much like the response after Jesus had fed the multitude and then He crosses the Sea and they come after Him. He says, “*You have not come across the Sea [of Galilee] seeking me because of the signs that I performed.*” (The signs would have indicated His spiritual power and authority.) He says, “*You haven’t come because of the signs, but because I gave you bread.*” It is the same, not necessarily the same crowd, but it is the same kind of motivation [as in that former multitude]. For the most part as Jesus deals with this crowd they will prove to be much like [Jesus] described in the [Parable of] the four soils. They will be rocky soil, a thin layer of receptivity, beneath which is a rock hard. . . rock hard resistance to the authority of God. They are like the weed infested soil. “Sure, I’ll take God and Buddha and commercial success: give me all!!!” Did you ever understand the description of the weed infested soil that way? That is the American mantra, isn’t it. “Give me all, everything I can get, including enough religion. Yeah!” Of course the end of that is death.

If you go back and look at verse 41 of chapter 6, you will see that John describes the Pharisees as grumbling about Jesus. If you come up and look in verse 60 you will see that he uses the same word for the crowd, they grumble about Jesus. He draws a parallel between them. Grumbling springs from a judgmental and uncomprehending heart regarding the Lord Jesus Christ.

This raises a question, and I thought it would be right for us to consider this question. One of the things that I think—well I don’t think, I know—we are called as a body of believers to do, is we are called to address the gospel, meaning the whole counsel of God’s saving truth, to our community. My wife and I were talking about that yesterday. The question arises, how do we address God’s saving truth to our community? Of course our community like any community has a number of levels and layers of people in different situations. Here we see that Jesus is now dealing with another strata of society. In this case how do you present the gospel to the needy, to the relatively uneducated and far less privileged classes of a social order? We have today in our American [religious or church] culture a dominant approach that is set before us. That is that when you deal with people who are disadvantaged in this particular way, you go slow; you don’t rush at them with lots of information. And certainly you go “soft”; you don’t lay out the whole counsel of God with its many strange demands upon them. Lastly of these three is recognizing and responding to their weakness; you expect little of them.

So how does Jesus respond? That is what our culture is saying, but [by contrast] look at verse 62. In v. 62 this is what John records; Jesus says, “*Do you take offense at [the hard saying that He had mentioned before, of eating his flesh and drinking his blood]? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?*” What I think we should recognize is that in dealing with these people, Jesus does not go soft, he does not go slow, and he does not lower expectations at all, quite the contrary. In thinking about these people, there are some things we have to remember and they are essential for us to remember. This group of people has already been exposed to many miracles; they have seen displayed the power of God through Jesus. Furthermore, we know that they have already been exposed to a considerable amount of teaching by Jesus, and in response to that teaching the spontaneous observation has been made, “This man does not talk like scribes and Pharisees; this man talks with authority.” They felt and they responded to the difference, they were amazed as they heard Jesus talk. Then lastly, particularly for this level of society, they have seen Jesus step forward and challenge the rich and the powerful, the dominant people who controlled that society and, by the way, kept it in a condition of corruption for their own advantage. You have to know those three things at least in order to [appreciate] the way Jesus dealt with this group of people. This being the case, this crowd has had adequate evidence already in order to have their ears opened to listen to Jesus.

Now, my allusion earlier to the “go slow, go soft and don’t expect too much” approach to evangelism, is obviously a reference to [the] seeker sensitive [teachings]. It is easy for us to be critical of the seeker sensitive churches. But if we are going to effectively present the gospel to our community, then I think we need to think very seriously about

the three things that Jesus had already done in order to win a hearing in the hearts of those He sought. In other words, have we as a body of believers had faith for miracles in the life of our church? Have we prayed? Have we sought God’s face? Have we said, “God, what do you want us to do, and whatever You want us to do, we will trust that You will enable us to do it.” Have we presented ourselves to God and said, “Don’t ask us to do only what we can do in our own strength. Challenge us to do what we can only do in Your strength, so the world will see that You are alive in this body of believers.” Secondly, have we had faith to enter our community and to boldly state the truth? Thirdly, have we had faith to go into our community and challenge those who perpetuate its corruptions, challenging those who enjoy positions of privilege and power in our community and hold it right where it is? If we want to represent the Lord Jesus, we have to act like the Lord Jesus. I think we need to pray about that.

The conclusion that Jesus rightly comes to, that the Father rightly comes to regarding this crowd is that they are shallow and indecisive followers. They blow away quickly. Remember this is the crowd which in part at least in the end up saying “Crucify, crucify?”

Jesus knows this about the people He is dealing with and what we see Him doing here is that He is challenging them. This is what He said, remember: “*What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending where He was before?*” The minute that that crowd heard the term “Son of Man” they would have known what He was talking about because the prophecy in Daniel 7 was central to the hope and the aspiration of all the Jewish people. They were waiting for the day that the Messiah – and that is who is being referred to in Daniel 7 – would return and would solve their problems, making them the pre-eminent, glorious, magnificent, triumphant kingdom in the world. They would have heard that when Jesus made reference to the Son of Man. [But] this confronts this crowd with a difficult question regarding Jesus’ true origin: who in fact is this man who has performed miracles and has challenged the power structure of our society and speaks the truth in ways that we recognize are filled with power? Jesus is pushing the envelope, as it were.

If we go back to verses 41-43 you will see that when Jesus dealt with the religious elite, He raised the question of “who is he?” Who was his father? Who was his mother? Where was he born? What town was he from? Could he even be the Prophet or could he be the messiah? That was the question that arose among the religious elite. Here the same question is being raised by Jesus [with the crowd]: “Who am I?” And basically this is the question: “Is this boy who grew up in Nazareth in fact the Son of Man referred to in Daniel?” This is Daniel 7:13-14: He is the one who “...*came to the Ancient of Days* [a reference to God the Father] *and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed.*” Thinking about Daniel 7:13-14 and applying it to Jesus, that would be hard, wouldn’t it, hard to believe that somebody’s background that you know could be that person. Who could listen to that?

Jesus does not leave [the crowd] at this hard saying. He does not linger at this point. He moves them on immediately. If you look at verse 63 you see that He puts in front of them this exceedingly difficult [notion] that He could be in fact the Messiah, the one referred to in Daniel 7, and then he makes this comment in verse 63, “*It is the Spirit Who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken are spirit and life.*” Two things tell me that Jesus’ intention here was not to patiently explain things so as to secure the understanding and continued loyalty or following of the crowd. The first is that He utters what would only have been a dark and troubling judgment. He says, “Some are here who do not believe.” Understand that these people think of themselves exactly the way verse 60 describes them; they think of themselves as disciples. A disciple is one who, in that culture, had come to follow the teachings; but you didn’t just follow the teachings, you followed the teacher and you brought yourself in submission under the teacher’s authority. So they liked to think of themselves as the disciples, the followers of Jesus. That is [how] they wanted to think of themselves. So to have the leader then look out over the

group and say, “but there are some who do not believe”, what would be the response? Well as I thought about that – and I always pray as I work on these messages – I thought to myself, the parallel that I see would be in the Upper Room. On the night of [Jesus’] betrayal when Jesus mentions to the twelve, “one of you...”

If you look at the passage [here in John 6:64-65] you will see that is exactly where John takes us, and we will look at that in just a moment. What happened with the other eleven – I don’t know what Judas Iscariot was thinking. I cannot get into get into his mind. I don’t want to be in his mind! – but what do all the rest of them do? All the rest of them [ask], “Is it me? Is it me? Am I one who doesn’t really believe?” I think that was exactly Jesus’ intention. He wants [the people of the crowd] to be unsettled. I believe that Jesus is prodding the people so that they will see the real condition of their hearts. He wants them to understand that they are fair weather friends at best. He wants them to know that. Because until they can deal with that reality, they will duck, they will duck and let the arrows of conviction fly by so they can remain in the pleasant illusion: “I’m a disciple; I’m a follower of Jesus. That is what I am.”

As I mentioned, if you go down to the 64th verse – what we’ve just considered is Jesus dealing with this crowd which had adequate evidence to know the truth of the gospel, the real power of the gospel, and you need to keep that in your mind all the time – but if you come down to the 64th verse, John takes, as I indicated, the reader to a far more troubling level of reflection. Everybody who read this Gospel already knew the end of the story, for of course the gospels were written long after Jesus had died and rose again from the dead. Therefore the Gospel was written long after Judas had betrayed Jesus on that night. So they know these things, they are in their minds as they read it. John applies Jesus’ words as a kind of prophetic foreknowledge of the betrayal by Judas. So he is dropping into our awareness something rather profound that we need to reflect upon carefully and deeply. That is that unbelief can have disastrous consequences in destabilizing and destroying a soul. In our very polite age we don’t like to rush people to commitment. I am extremely loth to do that personally. You don’t like to push people faster than they are willing to go. But at some point you do need to raise the issue, if you too long linger in doubt, if you too long linger without making a commitment, if you hang back long enough, there are consequences, there is an inner weakness and an erosion of your character. Eventually if you don’t step forward you will fall backwards. Judas fell. (I put down a little note: Judas is a study for another time. That is not my point now. Enough to say, “Ho!” because John sticks [it in] right here, “Ho!” If there is somebody in this room who has been struggling with this and saying, “O, I don’t know if I can make up my mind; I don’t want to make a commitment; I will work on this, I will pray about it some more, and some more, and some more...” And eventually you find that you are not praying about it as much. There comes a time when you need to stop praying and begin committing.

This brings us to the second reason for concluding that Jesus is not patiently teaching and seeking to remove misunderstanding and unbelief in the hearts and minds of the crowd. Of course He would love for them to understand and believe, but He is not being patient. He is saying, either do it or get out. He is pushing them. That is what I am doing to you right now as well.

You can see that Jesus is treating these people exactly as He treated the educated elite. In verse 65 notice what He says, “*This is why I told you no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.*” If you were one of that crowd, how would that come across to you? “I’m a follower of Jesus...” Then He makes these comments that make you feel like maybe there is a little question about that. Then He says, “By the way, the only way you can believe is that the Father has enabled you to believe.” “What am I supposed to do about that?” says the self-appointed disciple. Well I think it would come across – I have dealt with people in these terms – I think it would come across as rejection. You see if I don’t have an inward testimony of the Father’s presence and power at work within me, if I cannot sense the reality of His power and grace, if I have not responded with a believing heart to His truth, I am going to feel like, “Wow, man, I have just been pushed out; I don’t have that kind of testimony! What

is the point at this point? You just closed the door on me...” because it sounds as if Jesus is saying you are either in or your out and there ain’t nothing you can do about it. Now honestly folks, how many of us have been on both sides of those comments, both hearing them, and offering them?

Once again as I think in the last two messages, the right response at this point, the rational response – because these are all words that rational people can understand – is to go to the Father. Look, if the only person in the world who can let me into my house is my wife, and the door is locked, to whom should I appeal for an open door? It is an interesting truth about Jesus with all of His teachings and all of His miracles He continually points to the Father. My question to us is, how often do we go to the Father?

One of the books that I picked up [at the Ligonier’s Conference] is written by Rosemary Jensen. Some of you might recognize that name. She was a member, a former director of Bible Study Fellowship. How many of you ladies have been involved in Bible Study Fellowship? We really ought to get another chapter going. It is one of the outstanding ministries to women in the United States today. I think it is worldwide. But this is “Praying the Attributes of God”.

Notice, what is the real response to what Jesus has said? Verse 66, they all left. “*After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.*” Many, John says, because twelve stayed. Who were the twelve? The Twelve [Apostles]! The intentionality of Jesus’ dealing with the crowd is underscored in the conversation with the Twelve which follows. These are the men who have not only been with Him from the beginning but with whom He has worked most closely, demonstrating Who He is and explaining the purpose of the Father in sending Him. That is essentially what Peter confesses when responding to Jesus’ direct challenge as to whether or not they are prepared to remain with Him now that the crowd has fallen away. We see that in verses 66 and 67. “...*Jesus said to the Twelve, ‘Do you want to go away as well?’ Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.’*” This is a parallel to Matthew 16:16. It is a parallel to the confession that Peter gave there as it is recorded as having been given in the gospel of Matthew. What is important for us to understand when you read Matthew 16:16 and following is that immediately after he gives this wonderful confession, what does Peter do? He turns right straight around and rejects Jesus’ right to say something! Jesus says, “I’m going to go to the cross and die”, and Peter says, “No, you aren’t! You may well be the Son of God, but I know better than you!” [This is] one of Peter’s more [stunning moments!] A number of you are Peters, I know you well! It is really interesting. I, of course, am not a Peter!

Peter was a practical man, a man of fish and boats and business dealings and dealing with a lot of people who didn’t always have enough money. Like many practical people, Peter was only too ready to conclude that Jesus was perhaps too holy to know how to tie His own sandals, and therefore he is going to give Him some practical advice. Beloved, the way of sacrificial righteousness, service and devotion to God does not often commend itself to practical people. Peter’s objection, you have to know, came right out of his love for Jesus, which is why he is not condemned. He loves Jesus, and it grieves him to think that He would be lost, because surely a live Jesus is better than a dead one for getting things done.

Of course Jesus instantly passes judgment on Peter and says “You are Satan” because you are thinking according to the interests of men and not of God. The distinction between these two ways of looking at the issues of life indicates not only that Jesus looked at these matters differently, but God does. Jesus was no less interested in succeeding than Peter; they just didn’t understand success in the same way. Figuring out that difference is what the Bible from end to end.

Let me draw this application: I believe that God is calling us to be Jesus to our community. So we need to act like Jesus. But if we are going to do that, we are going to have to understand success the way Jesus understood it. The way He understood it was, for love’s sake, I will die for you, trusting that God will raise up life from my dying. So how do we as a church need to die for the sake of our community? We will not know the answer unless we pray.

Please join me in prayer now: Our gracious Father, it is way past time for Your people to wake up and recognize the nature of the spiritual battle we are currently in. It is way past time to see that good enough is not good enough, that we cannot merely attend to our own house and be content, but rather we need to bend the knee, seek Your face, and be prepared to do whatever it is You want us to do for our neighbors and our community. Because all of this Father, is for Your name’s sake. We would glorify You by seeing many saved and the kingdom of Your righteousness extended in our town. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

1. Do you think it is wrong to expect benefits as a result of faith in the Lord? If it is not wrong, how might such an expectation lead you to a wrong place?
2. Are there aspects of the Christian faith which you find to be “hard sayings”? How do you “carry” these as you seek to be faithful?
3. How far is it right to “shield” people from the hard things of the faith as you seek to evangelize them? What is the hazard of doing so? What is the risk if you don’t?
4. Has anyone of your acquaintance in times past gone on to do things or become something which seems amazing if not almost impossible to believe?
5. Have you had to deal with feelings of rejection, being shut out, or hopelessness?
6. There are various ways of understanding Judas. All of them one way or another see him as a man with little or no faith. Have you experienced either in yourself or in the life of someone around you the destabilizing effects of doubt or a loss of faith?
7. Do you agree with the idea that it is necessary and good for us to be forced to see and then deal with our lack or even absence of faith in aspects of our life?
8. How do the things or perhaps the priorities of God differ from those of man, especially for a man like Peter?
9. Do you have difficulty in accepting God’s passivity in the face of sin, or with the possibility that God even uses the sins of some people for accomplishing His purposes?
10. What is the most productive relationship between words and deeds or examples for Christian witnessing?
11. In your life or personal experience, what most compromises your freedom to know God?