



BETHEL  
PRESBYTERIAN

# MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## The Manner of Ministry, Part 2

Last week we considered the ministry of Pastoral Care in which we discovered, once again, that the calling rests upon each and every one of us here this day. Though God has entrusted to some the calling and ministry of raising a child unto maturity — we call this Parenthood — that doesn't mean that each of us don't have a corporate responsibility for the rearing up of the covenant children of this congregation. Though God has entrusted to some the calling and ministry of preaching/teaching, that doesn't mean that dads and moms ought not to educate their children in the Lord.

Truly church office was not designed to limit ministry, but ensure that the task gets done.<sup>1</sup> And thus, though there was a formal office of Evangelist in the early church, Paul exhorted Timothy, "...do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5b). Though the office of deacon was formally instituted in Acts, nevertheless the entire body is charged with the ministry of service.

1 Peter 4:10, "As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another..."

Though God established pastors to oversee the flock of God<sup>2</sup> nevertheless each and everyone of us has been charged with the calling of pastoral care. Recall that James does not describe the specific ministry of the leadership, BUT the general calling of leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Ephesians 4:11-12

<sup>2</sup> Compare Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Peter 5:1-4

James 1:27, "This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress..."

The word for "visit" is the activity of pastoral care! So we all have been charged with the care of each other's soul.

Yet what does that mean? What are we about as ministers and servants of Christ?

Last time we looked at this in detail and saw that our aim in pastoral care is one and the same as the purpose of the Sabbath in the lives of God's people; the refreshing or reviving of the soul.

Exodus 23:12, "Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease *from labor* in order that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves."

One of the stated purposes of the Sabbath for God's people is *naphash*; which carries the idea of having life breathed into us.<sup>3</sup> How does the Lord's Day provide for this blessing? For that we turn to the message of Peter:

Acts 3:19: "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

This word, *refreshing* is the same word used in the Septuagint (LXX) the word *naphash*. When a person comes to Christ, they are "breathed into by God" such that their soul is revived! Now placing Exodus 23 and Acts 3 together we conclude that the refreshment associated with the Sabbath involves mini-revivings of the soul in which the child of God is built up, encouraged, established, and matured in their faith via fellowshiping with Christ and His people.

And it is this that we are about in our pastoral care.

2 Timothy 1:16, "The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me..."

This is the same word as in Acts 3:19! The net effect of Onesiphorus' ministry in Paul's life was the "reviving of Paul's walk with Christ." Such is the ministry with which we have been charged.

Why did Paul endeavor to minister in Rome? He did so to enjoy mutual refreshment.

Romans 1:11-12, "For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you *while* among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine."

Pastoral ministry was not a one way street for Paul. As he ministered, he enjoyed mutual encouragement and so refreshment. This is THE ministry when it comes to the body life of a church. Once again, what stood out about Philemon to Paul?

Philemon 7, "For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother."

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<sup>3</sup> Compare Psalm 42:1-2 and Isaiah 26:8-9

Truly the call that rests upon each and everyone of us in Christ is laboring to refresh/revive the saints- “that their joy might be made complete” (1 John 1:4). We are to be a Sabbath to one another!

Last time we considered this calling in relation to John, “the elder”/the pastor.<sup>4</sup> Here we saw the occasion of John’s ministry.

2 John 12a, “Having many things to write to you...”

3 John 13a, “I had many things to write to you...”

John, moved with the growth of the church in grace, found his passion and focus could not be confined to these epistles. Accordingly, he was compelled to do much, much more which brought us to the options of pastoral ministry.<sup>5</sup> While John; and for that matter, Paul, Peter, Mark, Luke, and Jude; utilized the pen nevertheless his preference was to minister among God’s people face to face, in the flesh!

With this we are brought to an important question as it relates to putting this into practice: How does John’s example translate into practical Christian living in the twenty-first century? “Reviving” is so broad... what specifically ought to be our goal when we set about being a Sabbath to another person?

### ***The Permeation of Joy***

The text at which we are looking gives three objectives when it comes to the ministry of Pastoral Care; the first is the permeation of joy.

2 John 12d, “...that your joy may be made full.”

The word translated as, “made full” comes from the root, pleroo πληρόω. It means “to fulfill, complete, or carry out to the full.” While it could be used of the filling up of something, as in 2 Chronicles 24:10 when the offering chest was “filled” every day by the monies of God’s people; the term denotes far more. In fact it has three uses which have significance on our text this morning.

First, pleroo πληρόω was often used of the wind filling a sail and thereby carrying a ship along and so directing it in its course.<sup>6</sup> With this nuance, to have our joy made full is to have it direct us in our lives! Thus, while duty and obligation so often is that which impels us in ministry, we must labor that “the joy of the Lord” be that which impels us.

Second, pleroo πληρόω carries the idea of permeation, and was used of salt’s permeating meat in order to flavor and preserve it. God wants joy to so permeate the lives of His children that everything they think, say, and do is affected by it! Thus, we long for one another to know the “joy of the Lord” not only in good times, but in sorrow, sickness, suffering.

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<sup>4</sup> Compare 2 John 1 and 3 John 1

<sup>5</sup> Compare 2 John 12b; 3 John 13b-14a

<sup>6</sup> Compare 2Peter 1:21 for another example of this type of moving.

Third, the word has the connotation of total control. For example, the person who is filled with sorrow<sup>7</sup> is no longer under his own control but is totally under the control of that emotion. The individual who is filled with fear,<sup>8</sup> anger,<sup>9</sup> faith,<sup>10</sup> or even Satan<sup>11</sup> is no longer under his own control but under the total control of that which dominates him. To be filled with Joy in this sense is to be totally dominated and controlled by it. And it is this “permeation of Joy” in the lives of the people of this body which is our first objective when it comes to pastoral care!

### ***Christ in the Garden***

In fact if we were to look for THE example of a “joy made full” we would have to go to the Garden of Gethsemane and our blood stained Savior who, though He was burdened beyond belief and so sweet drops of blood, nevertheless prayed “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).

How is it that Christ could submit to the bitter providence of the Cross?

Christ submitted to the providence of the Cross because the “joy of the Lord was His strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). The Hebrew writer speaking of Christ says that it was because of “the joy set before Him [that He] endured the cross, despising the shame, and... sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2).

Family of God, joy is not simply an emotion which wells up when we think of happy things. It is that which impelled Christ in and through the agonies of the cross! And it is this that must impel us! Yet what does this mean? What is joy?

The term for joy, frequently mentioned both by John and the Lord.<sup>12</sup> It references NOT an emotion per se though it will affect our emotions. Rather in Scripture it speaks of a deep seated conviction that it is well with our soul before God! Peter having just referenced the consummation of our salvation wrote, “In this you greatly rejoice [IOW, on account of this you have exceeding joy] even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials”(1 Peter 1:6).

What are the trials that daily confront us in comparison to the salvation that is ours in Christ this day? Thus in reference to the ravaging affects that persecution had on his body, Paul wrote, “Therefore we do not lose heart [IOW, we’re always filled with joy] but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

See, when the sinner comes to understand that before God they stand condemned, that their righteous deeds performed in the name of Christ are but “filthy rags” in God’s eyes,<sup>13</sup> AND YET God nevertheless has forgiven them, “the Joy of the Lord” permeates their life and so drives them, colors their perspective, and encourages them in and through all things! That is what Biblical Joy is all about!

Thus to the person who has...

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<sup>7</sup> Compare John 16:6

<sup>8</sup> Compare Luke 5:26

<sup>9</sup> Compare Luke 6:11

<sup>10</sup> Compare Acts 6:5

<sup>11</sup> Compare Acts 5:3

<sup>12</sup> Compare 1 John 1:4; 2 John 4; John 15:11; 16:20, 22, 24; 17:13

<sup>13</sup> Compare Isaiah 64:6

- Become weary and heavy laden...
- Become discouraged by their marriage, job, family, children, future, past, or present...
- Allowed the things of this world so much a place in their lives that they lack joy.

...the Biblical prescription is NOT to change one's environment, BUT to stop down-playing our sin, humble ourselves before God, gaze upon the cross, and there see that we have been reconciled to God. That is the recipe for joy found in the Bible!

I've quoted this before- yet listen again to the words of A. W. Tozer...

All the problems of heaven and earth, though they were to confront us together and at once, would be nothing compared with the overwhelming problem of God: That He is; what He is like; and what we as moral being must do about Him.

The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved of 10,000 temporal problems, for he sees at once that these have to do with matters that at the most cannot concern him for very long; but even if the multiple burdens of time may be lifted from him, the one mighty single burden of eternity begins to press down upon him with a weight more crushing than all the woes of the world piled one upon another. That mighty burden is his obligation to God. It includes an instant and lifelong duty to love God with every power of mind and soul, to obey Him perfectly, and to worship Him acceptably. And when the man's laboring conscience tells him that he has done none of these things, but has from childhood been guilty of foul revolts against the Majesty in the heavens, the inner pressure of self-accusation may become too heavy to bear.

The gospel can lift this destroying burden from the mind, give beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. But unless the weight of the burden is felt, the gospel can mean nothing to the man; and until he sees a vision of God high and lifted up, there will be no woe and no burden. Low views of God destroy the gospel for all who hold them.<sup>14</sup>

This must be our aim when it comes to our ministry in the lives of our loved-ones, the nations, and one another. We are not about...

- People feeling good.
- Happy children.
- Self help.

Rather, we are about one another. We must come to a fuller understanding of the glorious gospel of our Lord and so being filled with joy to the utmost! We must strive together to live on the gospel in our lives. We must be driven and compelled by the joy of the Lord. This will necessarily constitute a large part of our pastoral ministry!

### ***Encouragement in Service, 2 John 13; 3 John 14c.***

2 John 13, "The children of your chosen sister greet you."

3 John 14c, "...the friends greet you. Greet the friends by name."

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<sup>14</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, pages. 10-11.

Just a couple of weeks back we discussed the concept of the “Christian Greeting” and there saw that the expression was far more than just a “Hi!” or “Tell them I’m thinking about them.” It involved an endorsement, usually over a meal, in which the host gave the right hand of fellowship to the individual. Again, we see it in 2 John 10.

- First there is the “receiving into ones home.”
- Then there is the “greeting.”

Clearly the giving of a “greeting” was far more than a friendly nod in the market place. It was an endorsement during a meal by which the person was helped, encouraged, extended housing for the night, and then sent away with the best wishes and prayer of the host. And yet this greeting is a common close to many of the epistles of the New Testament.<sup>15</sup> In these instances it obviously could not involve a meal or the helping of someone on their way. So what does it mean here? It means nothing less than an endorsement... an encouragement unto faithfulness and steadfastness as the individual was reminded that others in unknown parts of the Kingdom of God were pulling for them!

Did you get that?

The greeting offered by John in these epistles was nothing less than a statement that NOT only were he and the brethren watching and so concerned about them BUT

- They were praying for them.
- They had a vested interest in them.
- They’d be watching them with bated breath.

What do you suppose the impact would be on a Chinese Christian in jail if they knew that hundreds of thousands of Christians are praying for them and so pulling for them in their suffering? That’s happening on account of such magazines like *The Voice of the Martyrs*.

What would be the impact in your life if you knew that the members of this body were NOT...

- Looking down upon you.
- Hoping for you to trip.
- In competition with you.
- Seeking for your ruin.

...but as a loving family, were praying for you and cheering for you in your labors for the Lord? It would encourage you on to faithfulness in your walk!

That’s the idea when it comes to the “giving of a greeting” in the Bible it is nothing less than an endorsement! And that’s another goal when it comes to refreshing the saints. We can’t be there when...

- One of us interviews for a job.
- Bob is confronted with temptation.
- The child is taking a test.

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<sup>15</sup> cf. Romans 16; 1 Cor. 16; 2 Cor. 13; Philippians 4; Colossians 4; 1 Thes. 5; 2 Tim. 4; 1 Pet. 5; etc.

But what an encouragement to know that this body is pulling for them! What an encouragement to know that if their life was lived out in an arena and we were in the stands, we'd be cheering them on! There are people in this room that have gone on record in saying, "Listen, you ever need help when it comes to..."

- Fighting against sin.
- Parenting your children.
- Getting a job.
- Growing in your walk.

...we'll be there; you need only call!" All of this and more is what is implied by "the giving of a greeting" in the Bible. And that, and nothing less, is expected of us as a church body filled with ministers of the Lord.

Toward that end, let us be careful as we minister to one another that we do not hastily give an endorsement/a greeting. For I can think of few things that could be less heartening in the context of trial and difficulty than receiving a "greeting" and then having it withdrawn in the time of need. That's what is behind James' words.

James 2:15-16, "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?"

And so the goal when it comes to refreshing the saints is enabling them to come to a fuller understanding of the glorious gospel of our Lord and hence, being led, affected, and controlled by joy! Endorsing them and so committing to them our time, resources, and energy that they might become all that God has called them to be. Lastly, it also involves the well being of their walk.

### ***The Well-Being of their Walk, 3 John 14b***

3 John 14b, "...Peace *be* to you..."

In the context of the Kingdom of God, peace takes on a twofold idea. First, it speaks of the cessation of the war which began in the garden and yet was ended by Christ at Calvary. Thus it involves a reconciliation of God with man in which our pre-fallen relationship with God is restored! The word used for this is, "Peace."

Colossians 1:19-20a, "For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross."

Romans 5:1, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Ephesians 2:17-18, "And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father."

In this context the "Peace of God" references the fact that God no longer is angry with us. His warfare has ended such that today He views us as His friend! This is the Objective Peace which comes from God.

Secondly, there is another way in which “peace” is used in the Bible. In contrast to the Objective Peace, it also can reference the Subjective Peace which settles upon the individual as a result.

Philippians 4:6-7, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Colossians 3:15, “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.”

Galatians 1:3, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The “peace” mentioned in these passages all reference what has been defined as “a tranquility of the soul which arises on account of the cross of Christ.” As a fruit of the Spirit<sup>16</sup> it is the confident trust in God’s flawless wisdom and infinite power which results in calm amidst the storms of life.

John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

Christ gave a prophecy about the disciple’s not so bright future, they indeed would be severely tested and tried.<sup>17</sup> Yet why did He give them such a forewarning? So that when the time came that they were so persecuted, they would have peace knowing that...

- God hadn’t left the throne.
- Their trials were part of God’s eternal purpose.

John 20:19, Following Christ’s resurrection when the disciples were troubled, Christ’s first words to them in the upper room were, “Peace be with you.” In other words, Calm down! I am still on the throne. Let not your heart be troubled!

### ***Christ Asleep on the Boat***

Do you remember that time in Christ’s second year of ministry when He was travelling with His disciples on the Sea of Galilee? After a busy day of ministry, Christ was asleep in the boat as His disciples rowed to the other side of the lake. But then they were confronted with one of the peculiarities of the geography of Palestine, a raging storm.

Recall that moving eastward from the Mediterranean Sea the land of Palestine gradually climbs from sea level to a height of 2,000 ft. in the Central Mountains. But then as you travel further east, the mountains suddenly drop off to 680 ft. below sea level. This is where the Sea of Galilee rests. Because of this geographical phenomenon, a terrible storm could be brewing on the Mediterranean Sea, but the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee would never know it. But then as the storm passed over the Central Mountains a gale force wind would then rush down the canyon and, literally in a moment of time, turn the Sea of Galilee from serenity to a raging sea.

It was one of these storms that hit the boat in which Christ and His disciples were travelling. And yet

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<sup>16</sup> Galatians 5:22

<sup>17</sup> Compare John 16:32



what was Christ's reaction?

Matthew 8:23, "And behold, there arose a great storm in the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves; but He Himself was asleep."

How is it that Christ could remain asleep in the boat? Christ remained asleep for- as God- He knew that He and the disciples were safe in the arms of God.

That is the Subjective Peace referenced in the Bible. It speaks of (1) a calm in one's soul (2) as the result of having entrusted itself to a faithful Creator in doing what is right (1 Peter 4:19).

That is what John here is wishing upon the believers to whom he is writing. Though the day in which they lived was treacherous, nevertheless that for which John longed and labored amongst the body of Christ was that they might know the peace of Christ- that is what constitutes the third goal when it comes to Refreshing the Saints!

So as we endeavor to refresh the saints, we actively labor for one another to take solace in the character of God- His greatness, control, plans, and will. Practically speaking, this means that in our ministry we encourage one another not simply to profess that God is sovereign, but actually to live in light of His nature.

Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe."

Ought this not to be a characteristic plea of the child of God, "Take refuge in the character of God!?" Truly what we long for when it comes to refreshing the saints is for the individual believer to learn to trust God. It is only when we are relying upon God that we can know practical peace.

Ephesians 3:12, "But I will leave among you a humble and lowly people, and they will take refuge in the name of the Lord."

Zephaniah had the awful job of pronouncing God's judgment upon the rebellious and cold-hearted Israelites of his day. Yet part of the message was an encouragement to the remnant facing an uncertain future.

What was the encouragement? That their well being only could be had by taking refuge in the name/character of God. The message remains the same today.

Child of God it is both our duty and calling to come to know the character of God and so trust Him! In fact the distinction between a child in the faith and a father in the faith revolves around this point.

Recall, the child in the faith knows that Christ is their Savior (1 John 2:13b). Yet they don't know the ins and outs of God's character such that though they love Christ, nevertheless they easily can be shaken to question God and His goodness. Yet to a father in the faith, God's goodness, kindness, sovereignty, and the like are never in question (1 John 2:14). In the words of Paul, their confident assertion is this:

Romans 3:4b, "...let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar..."

Accordingly, the mature Christian knows that God is good. They are not moved to question or doubt God's character though the world be against them. There is no valley dark enough nor journey so

perilous that God's purpose could be drawn into question. In fact from this perspective we see that the goal of Christian Refreshment is one and the same as a godly pulpit. Cotton Mather, who ministered in New England 300 years ago, said, "The great design and intention of the office of a Christian preacher [is] to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men."<sup>18</sup> John Piper added "The keynote in the mouth of every prophet-preacher, whether in Isaiah's day or Jesus' day or our day, is 'Your God Reigns!'"<sup>19</sup>

Fellow Ministers, that's what we're after in our ministry. It is this maturation and disposition for which we labor and strive when it comes to Refreshing the Body of Christ. We long for one another to know the Peace of God and so know and become convinced both of the sovereignty of God and His goodness!

### **About Bethel Presbyterian Church**

*The Bethel Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word* is published regularly.

### **VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO**

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10<sup>th</sup> Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

All our sermons can be accessed via the World Wide Web. The recording for this sermon (the last few minutes were not recorded because of a power outage during the sermon) and these notes can be found at [Joy and Peace in the Lord](#). The web address for all sermons at Bethel Presbyterian Church can be found out as follows: <http://bethelpresbyterian.sermonaudio.com>

### **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on May 10, 2009. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church.

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<sup>18</sup> *Student and Preacher, or Directions for a Candidate of the Ministry*, p. v.

<sup>19</sup> *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, p. 23.