

Zeal for Real

Prayer

I remember several years ago when I was waiting for the ferry from Horseshoe Bay to Nanaimo. A ferry had broken down and caused a backlog. In fact, cars were lined up for several kilometers before the gates of the ferry doc. The impact was felt all the way back into North Vancouver.

We were waiting in our cars for hours, some people had gotten out of their cars and had picnics on the side of the road, others had taken naps in their cars, others were wandering aimlessly up and down the rows of cars. In short, there was no forward movement for a long, long time.

We were stopped from moving forward due to a problem and so the excitement of our trip to Vancouver island started to wane. We were bored, cranky, over-heated. We started playing Eye-Spy and other games to distract ourselves. Our air conditioner didn't work. We were hungry, thirsty and frustrated. Seems kind of reasonable after a five-hour wait in hot traffic with little forward movement.

Have you ever considered that sometimes there seems to be a blockage in our forward movement and so we become spiritually tired? Has anyone ever seen a Christian playing spiritual games and avoiding what God is really asking them to do? Does anyone here this morning feel frustrated or spiritually stuck?

If so... I would have to say that you are probably also suffering from the loss of your spiritual passion.

Now words and slogans can inspire us and spur us on to good works. They can encourage us and enlighten us. For example: "Let Go and Let God!" This is a great slogan when we are struggling, trying too hard, trying to do it on our own without God's help. We need to have faith and trust God. But like so many things in language, the context or perspective is important. If we are trying to do everything in our own strength and struggling, this makes sense.

If we have the wrong attitude or perspective; however, this can take on a meaning not really intended. For example:

- I am not going to try to solve my problem; I'm content to "Let God and let God".
- Why should I try to lead a sinless life, I just "Let go and let God"
- Why should I talk to people about Jesus, they will either be saved or not "Let Go and let God",
- Why should I work out my salvation with fear and trembling, I should just "Let Go and let God"

- Why should I participate in the vision of the church, I should just “let go and let God”

Here is the problem folks - Could the almighty God save each person without human involvement? Could he solve the problems of the world without us? Could he do anything? The answer is YES he could. But God has given us a mandate to be co-laborers with him. We are called to be disciples and seek and save the lost. We are called to be participants in the church the great body of Christ. We are called to purpose.

We are called to servant-hood in Christ Jesus.
We are NOT called to apathy

Are we saved from damnation by our good works? NO!
Are we called to live righteous lives of purpose before the almighty God as co-laborers of his mission here? YES!

Here is something that is seldom taught but that you must know...

The Holy Spirit works within us to bring about the likeness of Christ within us. This is not a call to be passive, do nothing, sit back and hope to become a Mega-Christian over time. There is no mega-spiritual life out there, filled with peace and bliss that is problem free.

We go through trials, we learn by experience... Consider the following

James 2:26:

James makes the statement “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”

Faith without works is dead faith because the lack of works reveals an unchanged life or a spiritually dead heart. We are called to do good works.

James 1:2-8 NIV

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do

God uses trials and tests to bring about our spiritual growth and development. We will be tried and tested.

We don't like to think of ourselves as servants, but we are called to be servants of God. Are we not called to be like Christ?

Philippians 2:7 ESV – “But made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”

John 12:26 ESV – “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.”

2 Corinthians 4:5 ESV – “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.”

1 Peter 2:16 ESV – “Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.”

All of us are called to spread his Word. It is his great commission from Matthew 28:19 ESV – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”

This is for every Christian not just the five-fold ministry.

Friends we cannot just sit back and “Let go and let God” while this statement is so very encouraging when used properly and in its context it makes a world of Godly sense. If used improperly it is a road to apathy and complacency.

We need to be lights in the dark and spread the good news of Jesus Christ!

Romans 10:15 ESV – “And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

An incredibly encouraging scripture for all Christians is Romans 8:28 ESV – “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

When we go through those trials and struggles, God is working it out for our good, so that we may be complete!

We must bring our thoughts into captivity to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy

strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete

So many Christians have become passive and apathetic. When did this idea come into the church that we could rest on our laurels and achieve mega-Christian status by the passing of time. My Friends, this is not the Christian walk but a shadow of deception promulgated by the enemy.

Do you know why our churches are not full today? Do you know why we don't have revival?

My friends can we agree that: In this life we don't always get what we want or we what we think we deserve... we get what we are willing to settle for..."

We don't have revival, because quite frankly we are willing to live without it!

How many of us have watched a hockey game and seen the team trying hard to get into the playoffs? They work hard don't they? Now making an average of \$50k per game whether you win or lose, is a fact. Regardless of the outcome, your income is secure, you might not get all the prestige or glory of winning but there is no fundamental cost to you in loss. Now consider if the same game was played and if the player lost, they would lose their life... Do you think the intensity would be greater in the game? There would be more at stake wouldn't there?

They would be playing the game as though their life depended on it... and it would.

Now Christians, we are saved when we believe in Jesus Christ, nothing else is required. Here are the facts, we are still called to live our lives meaningfully. No greater thing can a man do than lay down his life for his friends () yet many of us are not living our lives this way. So what? We must live our lives with abandon to Christ, by putting our whole heart into it... The simple fact here folks is others lives depend on your walking wholeheartedly engaged and committed to Christ.

Have we lost our Zeal?

We should honestly check our hearts and our spirits this morning...

We are to serve with intense effort and motivation.

Not me folks... Hear ye the word of the Lord!

Romans 12:11 NIV – "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord."

Let every word be established with two or more scriptures. Are we on a path to death for apathy sake?

How about Ecclesiastes 9:10

NKJV - Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

NIV - Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom

Okay, let's pause for a moment here... What is being asked of us?

We must be passionate, enthusiastic, perseverant, dedicated, knowledgeable, and content regardless of trials or bad circumstances. We must not be spiritually lazy.

Did you notice that I through knowledge in the mix...

Proverbs 19:2 HCSB says: "Even zeal is not good without knowledge, and the one who acts hastily sins."

I throw this in, because initially, we must be zealous to learn about Jesus, to discover his Word, to meet with him in prayer. We must learn about the good news so that we are ready to share it. So we must be zealous and focused on mission.

One does not simply decide to get up and say to his or her self. Today I will be apathetic... No, this happens gradually as the enemy deceives the Christian. Slowly the Christian will choose to make excuses for not doing what God wants him or her to do. They may choose to postpone tasks and begin to refuse to do what God has asked. It is an almost imperceptible journey, that has ever so slowly eroded their zeal and focus.

Are we alert? What has happened to our churches?

Isaiah 56:10 – "You leaders of Israel should be watchdogs, protecting my people. But you can't see a thing, and you never warn them. Dozing and daydreaming are all you ever do. You stupid leaders are a pack of hungry and greedy dogs that never get enough. You are shepherds who mistreat your own sheep for selfish gain."

Jesus told a parable about some bags of Gold and some servants in Matthew 25:14-28. This parable is a type of the gifts given to each Christian to enrich the yield to the kingdom of God.

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. 15 To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,[a] each according to his ability. Then he went on his

journey. 16 The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. 17 So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. 18 But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'

21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

22 "The man with two bags of gold also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.'

23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

24 "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

26 "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.'

28 "So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. 29 For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

When we are not good stewards of that which God has given us, when we become apathetic or lazy, when we lose our zeal for God, we can make choices that seem right to us, but miss what God has for us. We all have a purpose and a calling and

God wants you to fulfill that calling. You are called to co-labor with him. In this parable, could the master have invested his own money? Yes! Could he have sought great return based on his experience? Yes! But herein we find the master trusting his servants to increase his kingdom... Are we increasing his kingdom today or have we lost our zeal?

Are we passionate about the things of God or have we become complacent in his kingdom? Are we offering up our bodies and our lives as a living sacrifice to God or are we sometimes fitting him in on a Sunday morning for two hours?

Want an example of a man with Zeal?

Let's look at Phinehas in Numbers 25:11,12 HCSB

The Lord spoke to Moses, "Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the Israelites because he was zealous among them with My zeal, so that I did not destroy the Israelites in My zeal. Therefore declare: I grant him My covenant of peace

How about 2 Kings 10:15-16 HCSB

When he left there, he found Jehonadab son of Rechab coming to meet him. He greeted him and then asked, "Is your heart one with mine?" "It is," Jehonadab replied.

Jehu said, "If it is, give me your hand."

So he gave him his hand, and Jehu pulled him up into the chariot with him. Then he said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord!" So he let him ride with him in his chariot

My friends, when we truly serve our Lord Jesus Christ; our attitude of servant hood is seen in our actions. We must be eager, passionate, focused, knowledgeable and faithful in our service to him. Have we stopped serving because we have lost sight of our love for him?

Let me be blunt... A Christian who does not serve the Lord has deceived themselves. The very nature of a Christian is to be like Christ who came as a servant.

Did you know that the Greek word for "Serve" is "Doulos". This word actually means one who is bound to another. In the scriptural context it refers to a person who dutifully obeyed the masters commands. A bond servant as this indicates was bound to the masters will and devoted to him, regardless of his own needs or interests.

We are not volunteers in church but stewards carrying out the will of our Lord.

We need to find our identity in Christ...

- We are a chosen people – 1 Peter 2:9
- We are a royal priesthood
- We are a holy nation
- We are his special possession
- We are his sons and daughters – 2 Corinthians 6:18
- We are his servants – 2 Corinthians 6:4

We are so rich and he has given us so much, why do we refuse to obey and walk in God's will as Christ exemplified.

What does Titus 2:13-15 YLT tell us:

... waiting for the blessed hope and manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who did give himself for us, that he might ransom us from all lawlessness, and might purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; these things be speaking, and exhorting, and convicting, with all charge; let no one despise thee.

Christians this morning I call your attention to these scriptures:

Galatians 2:20 NKJV

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Have you died to yourself?

John 14:21 NKJV

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

Are you leading a life acceptable to God?

Psalms 122:1

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Are you glad to come to church and plug in?

Philemon 1:6

“...that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus”
Are you sharing your faith?

Finally let me remind you of Revelations 3:15

“ I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.”

My friends today we need to be consumed with our desire to serve the Lord.

Psalms 69:9

Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up... And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me

When we become like Christ and hunger after his righteousness and are consumed by our desire to serve the Lord we may suffer reproach of those around us, but I will gladly suffer their reproach to be called a friend of God.

Zeal is about letting the flame of the Spirit of God consume you, so that nothing is left but who God intended you to be in likeness of his Son Jesus.

Revelations 3:2-3

Wake up! You have only a little strength left, and it is almost gone. So try to become stronger. I have found that you are not completely obeying God. Remember the teaching that you were given and that you heard. Hold firmly to it and turn from your sins. If you don't wake up, I will come when you least expect it, just as a thief does

Apathy and Complacency have run rampant in our North American churches, our culture and consumer mentality have perverted that which the scripture has said. We must stand vigilant in our love of the Lord, let we miss out.

Are we content to live without the richness and blessings that God wants to bestow on his church or will we shake ourselves from our slumber and realize that God has set us free. We have a deliver from Zion whom we serve.

Will we shake ourselves today and embrace a passion and a desire for all the goodness of God and his plans for us?

We read that faith without works is dead... Will we take action?
The scripture says in John 14:15 that if we love him we will keep his commandments?

If our answer is yes then we need to turn that head knowledge and intellectual relationship with our God into a passionate servitude to him. We need to put his words into action.

I believe that the person is the message, what message is your life speaking today?

Prayer