

## Centered

### *Prayer*

Good Morning!

This morning I would like to talk about where we are centered. I am not talking about where the church is located, but rather what our own personally lives revolve around.

When we become saved, it is a miraculous event. I have spoken before about how we are Justified, propitiated, reconciled and redeemed. We have covered the legal rights aspect of our salvation, we have covered the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ for us, we have talked about being put back into right standing with God the Father and we have discussed the financial transaction which purchased us in Christ's blood. At other times we have discussed sanctification and its instantaneous and ongoing nature through the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit. Today I want to focus on a contrast between the Adam-like nature and the Christ-like nature. This takes sanctification to the next level. While we are sanctified before the Father because Christ covers us with a robe of righteousness and our inner natures are changed, there are still areas of the flesh that the Holy Spirit works on in each of us that helps us to grow and become more Christ-like. None of this should be new concepts for you today. If they are I encourage you to seek me out for a discussion on this basic tenants of faith.

### **Centeredness**

Let me start with an illustration of what I mean by centeredness.

Turn with me this morning to Genesis 3:9-12

*Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.*

Now let's take a look closer look at what is going on here.... Adam and Eve have eaten of the fruit of the knowledge of Good and Evil.

- God Says: "Where are you?"
  - God is omniscient – he knows where Adam is... What he is really asking is where he is at with him.
- Adam Says:
  - "I heard the sound of You in the garden"
  - "I was afraid"

- “I was naked”
- “I hid myself”
  - Adam reacts in a self-blinded, and totally self-focused way
    - Did you notice that everything he said started with “I”
    - Since that time of sin, mankind has hidden from himself, God and others ever since.
    - We were born into this Adamic nature, we hide in the trees and clutch our fig leaves about us to cover our nakedness.
- When he is caught in his sin, he blames his wife for giving him the fruit. Then he blames God

There is a good book by Martin Davis called the Ashes into Gold: The Journey of Spirituality where the author describes the fallen nature of man as:

"...an infantile, selfish despot that tolerates no frustration, brooks no delay of gratification, and reverences no master—including God. Sigmund Freud descriptively labeled this inner highchair tyrant "his majesty the baby," the metaphorical embodiment of our innate egocentricity, grandiosity, and false sense of omnipotence. His majesty's latent cries resound within each of us as he pounds his spoon upon his highchair and screams, 'I want! I want! I want!' In his boundless egocentricity, his majesty the baby views himself as the center of a personally constructed universe. He regards himself as the principal actor in the unfolding drama of life and all others as mere extras who exist solely to support him in his starring role..."

I heard a story about a pastor who sat at a conference table with 5 men. He said that he could tell you about the lives of each of them. He could tell you what each did for a living. How many children each had and how they came to The Lord. What he said next is astonishing... "Not one of the men asked me one question about my life..."

This is indicative of the spirit of the age. So many times people are unwilling to look beyond themselves to take an interest in somebody else.

The question that we are wrestling with this morning is how people who know The Lord and work at living a Godly Christian life can still be bound to living for themselves?

How can they be bound up so tight in self love or the love of their security net of people that they are complacent to others. why is it that so many of us as Christians cannot have the maturity or even courtesy to be mindful of the needs of those around us?

let me throw this out for your consideration... If we are bound up as Christians by such a self-oriented mindset, yes... even in our churches, how can we ever expect to be an influence on the world for Jesus?

Further, if we find these tendencies within us... how often we take this as an indicator that it is time to grow and get centred on what really matters... We have a new nature... Let's all embrace it!

Now Christ didn't come to save the righteous he came to save the sinner. Now we being born again in Christ are born into a new nature wherein we are covered in the Robes of Christ's righteousness and the Holy Spirit works his restorative work to bring about the likeness of Christ within us.

Turn with me to 1 John 1:5:8-10 (NASB)

*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us*

We cannot save ourselves and I believe that part of our salvation is salvation from our own fleshly ways.

(Sidebar – Gnostic believers hold that the actual flesh of man is evil and that only the spirit is righteous. This is a heresy...

2 Corinthians 5:17

*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come*

The Apostle John addresses this gnostic heresy "every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" This is an exclusive statement to mean Him as in Jesus alone as the only human who is also God. (Christ having two natures 100% God and 100% man)

1 John 4:3

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist*

2 Corinthians 5:21

*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (that him being Jesus)*

Jesus was sinless... and was incarnated in the flesh...)

Back to our main theme....

Christ didn't come to save the righteous he came to save the sinner. Now we being born again in Christ are born into a new nature wherein, we are covered in the Robes of Christ's righteousness and the Holy Spirit works his restorative work to bring about the likeness of Christ within us.

When we are focused on self and lacking consideration for those around us, we fall into an inward centered state.

When we consider the developmental states of a Christian believer we can see how God, through the restorative work of the Holy Spirit, and the new nature created within us through Christ's blood, brings us out of this self-absorbed state to re-center us, and grow us:

Baby Stage: (Me & I)

- Jesus died – for me
- I am new
- I need to learn
- What do I need to do

Toddler Stage: (Me & I)

- Jesus death gives me victorious life
- Jesus death bought my freedom
- Jesus took my place
- I am worthy and valued because of him

Teen: (Me to Him)

- In Jesus I died to myself and became alive unto him
- I need to change for him
- I need to be like him
- I appreciate what he did for me

Adult: (For Him)

- I want to bring honor and glory to God
- I want to bring a smile to Gods face
- I want him to use me as his servant
- My life is centered Jesus
- I want to give back to God in anyway I can, knowing I can never repay the debt I owe, but nevertheless willing to do what I can for him

This is not just “me” talking... I have seen this pattern in the Gospels over and over again. The most concrete example I can give you this morning comes from the Apostle Paul. Paul measured the maturity of Christians by the presence or absence of the fleshly nature in their lives. Paul said:

1 Corinthians 3:1-3

*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men*

1 Corinthians 13:11

*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things*

To sum this section up... Our maturity in Christ is essentially measured by the degree of selflessness in which we live out our lives. We are to love each other. I cannot say enough that this is not just an emotion but an action. Faith without works is dead.

In short, maturity is the willingness to lay our will and our rights at the feet of our king!

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing*

Godly Love is not focused on self... that is narcissism. Godly love is centered on Christ with a focus on the other.

2 Corinthians 5:14-19 (CEV)

*We are ruled by Christ's love for us. We are certain that if one person died for everyone else, then all of us have died. And Christ did die for all of us. He died so we would no longer live for ourselves, but for the one who died and was raised to life for us. We are careful not to judge people by what they seem to be, though we once judged Christ in that way. Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new. God has done it all! He sent Christ to make peace between himself*

*and us, and he has given us the work of making peace between himself and others. What we mean is that God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world. And he has given us the work of sharing his message about peace.*

We don't have to cover from God and hide in the trees covering ourselves with fig leaves. Christ has made us once again right with the Father and we can embrace the new nature that he has given us. We do not need to be held back by our flesh, but we can choose to walk away from our self-focus and become Christ centered.

Many never reach maturity because for them it is too hard to die to themselves for the sake of Christ. If you struggle with fear in letting go of what you want and embracing what God wants for you, pray.

If you feel The Lord speaking to you this morning, pray this with me in your hearts and minds...

"Lord Jesus I recognize that I have been purchased by your precious blood. I pray Lord Jesus that you will help me to embrace my complete salvation. I pray right now that you will deliver me from myself. I pray that my identity becomes defined in you and not in what I would construct for myself. I pray that i become centered on Christ and not on my own selfish wants and desires."

... And we pray this all for HIS glory, HIS honor and HIS praise.

I say again:

*He died so we would no longer live for ourselves, but for the one who died and was raised to life for us...*

*Prayer.*