

3/24/2019

“Repenting”

Scripture: Luke 14:1-5; Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-9; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Sermon Series: With All Your Heart

Theme: When we turn our hearts and lives back to God, God has mercy and provides a way that leads us to a feast of life.

† **We are often caught up in things of this world which do not truly satisfy our soul.**

Have you ever at times found yourself spending time, energy and money on things which don't really satisfy your soul, give your life meaning, joy or fulfillment? I know I have.

When I was very young, I enjoyed playing and winning games. Not sports, mind you, but board games and card games. Now, that in and of itself is not necessarily wasteful or harmful. And I wouldn't say that it became an obsession with me, but I did end up spending a considerable amount of spare time, and even money, doing it. At first it was just a way to relax and have fun with family and friends.

But during high school, as more time was spent playing for money, I felt I had a problem that could even affect my relationships. I had seen what serious gambling could do to a person and even whole families. And as I had become an intentional follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit placed it on my heart to give it up and let it go. But it wasn't until I had graduated college and briefly started a career as an investment broker in a firm that encouraged more high risk speculation, and saw the role models of so-called “success”, that I felt God calling me in a different direction.

I realized more fully from my studies of history, the Bible, and personal experience that although I once thought and believed that I could do a lot of good for people if I made a lot of money, the methods of making that money were just as important. And so I gave it up completely, and returned to God with all my heart.

You may have your own story to tell, like mine or of something else. Some activity or some substance that you thought was a good idea, or even gave you some sense of comfort, security, release, pleasure, or enjoyment got out of hand, took control, and perhaps even drew you far from God.

The point is this . . . We are often caught up in things of this world which do not truly satisfy our soul.

The people of Israel in the time of the prophet Isaiah had long strayed from the promises and the covenant with God. The people of Israel find themselves at the end of a very long exile in Babylon, of almost fifty years. As a generation passed, many who had grown accustomed to living in Babylon had forgotten or given up on the promises and covenant of God. What limited resources they had were being spent on things which didn't even satisfy their real needs. They were filled with thoughts and actions which continued to separate them from God.

So, God offers them hope through the words of Isaiah.

“Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” (55:6-7 NRSV)

He assures them of God's knowledge, thoughts, visions and grace that are far above common human ways. He says . . .

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (vs. 58-59)

How wonderful is our God!! How amazing is our God!! How awesome is our God!!
If we turn our hearts again to God, God will forgive and restore us with abundant love and blessings!

I am reminded of Jesus addressing the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:6-26), offering God's love, grace and new life through the living water which Jesus gives.

And perhaps the most familiar Bible story of repentance is what is most often referred to as the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), who had squandered his inheritance, which his father had given him in advance. And after he found himself working and eating among pigs, he came to his senses and returned home to his father seeking reconciliation. He realized that anything his father offered him would be better than his current condition. And how right he was!

† **Repentance is “turning” back to God, with hearts (feelings) and minds (thoughts) which motivate us and living on God's path/way that leads to new life and true fulfillment.**

Have you heard God speak to you in some way to let go of those things or relationships which have or do draw you away from the promises and gifts of God?

In his preaching and teaching, Jesus himself made it clear that all must repent or someday perish. It was common in his day for people to believe that bad things or tragedy came upon those who had sinned or disobeyed God, as punishment from God. And the greater the sin, the greater the punishment or tragedy, even death.

Luke tells us that there were some who were present with him in his travels one time who told Jesus about the Jewish Galileans whose blood Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, had mixed with their sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus answered, *“Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”* (Luke 13:1-5)

This is so. Whether it be at the hands of God, because *“God is not mocked. A person will harvest what they plant.”* (Galatians 6:7 CEB) Or whether it is simply of our own doing.

If you are carrying a heavy burden of guilt or shame, turn back to God.

If your resources are exhausted and you’re tired of barely getting by on your own, turn back to God.

If you truly want a rewarding and fulfilling life, being blessed and blessing others, turn back to God.

Wendy Orellana of Venezuela shared her witness in the Upper Room some time ago (UR 5/8/17). She says . . .

“One night, after a period of feeling detached from God, I received word that one of my childhood friends had died in a traffic accident. The news was so painful that I felt as if I had died inside, but it also caused me to reflect on my life in an extraordinary way and turn back to God. The worst pain of all was wondering, why did it take such a tragic event to make me reflect on my life and seek God again? As with many of the mysteries in this life, I still do not have an answer. The only thing I know with certainty is that I don’t want to detach anymore from the One who gave me life, from the Lord of hosts, from my loving Father.

“Many of us can be intense in our ambition for better finances, social positions, and recognition, but sometimes we forget that the Lord has given us these lives that we cherish. When I find myself striving for success, I have to ask myself: Am I putting my time to good use? Am I really living as if this were my last day?

“These and other questions help transform my thinking. God, who is rich in mercy, gives us opportunities again and again to repent of our wrongdoings and foolishness. When we do so, we can feel reborn.”

She prays: “Dear God, remind us that you are the one who gives us life. And help us to cherish each day that you give us. Amen.”

How have you or can you use this season of Lent to turn and draw closer to God; receive God’s forgiven and grace, and share in the abundant life offered by Jesus Christ?

If you haven’t already, do so this day!