

INSPIRED WORD

March 14, 2018

PRAYER

Lord, we come before You saying thank You for all the good that You have done in our lives and in the world and in our hearts. You are a great God and we worship You in humility. We praise Your name, Jesus, and we thank You for calling us here tonight. In Your holy Son's name, amen.

REVIEW

Welcome to the praise gathering. What we're going to do is just briefly review the word that God gave us last week, which was very, very powerful, and then talk a little bit about drawing closer to God. The theme we're going to use tonight is the Sacrament of Reconciliation, drawing close to God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Very, very briefly, looking at the word we got last week, Denise shared a beautiful scripture from John 17, and it's talking about the Lord and His prayer for the apostles - but not only His prayer for the apostles, but the prayer for us as well. And in that prayer He said, talking to His Father, "I have made you known to them and will continue to make You known to them in order that the love You have for me may be in them, and that I myself may be in them." And what an awesome statement – that Jesus was praying not only for the apostles but praying for who? For us, right? Yes, for us! Then we had a message in tongues with interpretation and a very, very powerful message there as well, because the Lord was speaking to each one of us individually and personally, where He said, "Have you heard me call your name?" Your name! Not only the name of the person next to you or across the room, but your name, my name. "Have you heard me call your name?" And then He said, "And now I say to you, it's time for you to know that I am Almighty God and that I go wherever you go, and I will call you to the places where I need you." So what He's saying to us here is that He's going to call you to those places that need to know about His love, and that you are bearers of that love; you are channels of that love and that He calls you to make known that love because there are persons that really need to know it. And He said whether it be in your home, or in the store, or the hospital, or wherever you are called, "know that I go with you. Know that I am the Lord Almighty and I have a heart for my people, a heart that is breaking for them to know my love. You know my love. Let that love flow through you and let that love flow out of you to my people who are starved for my love" - for knowing in their hearts the love of the Lord for them. And then a real strong encouragement, "Do not hesitate – walk. So that's the message I have given you. You know it, so now what? Walk – and do it." Right? And also, "Be not afraid." God is good / all the time! All the time / God is good. That is His nature / Wow!

TEACHING ON THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

The goal of drawing closer to God is to see His face, and as we see His face, we fall more in love with Him. But sometimes it's hard to see, and the image that I got this weekend when we were talking about this is a windshield. My husband and I have gotten to go on some really great road trips. We call them the gray road tours because that's the gray roads on the map that go all squiggly all over the place, instead of the highway blue lines. And we find the most beautiful scenery, and we are just amazed by the glory and the grandeur that we see on these gray road tours. It's the edge of the mountain you're looking down; if you're driving through the plains, it's just space as far as you can see. But if you've ever driven through some of those places, there can be a lot of bugs that get splattered all over the windshield, which makes it really hard to see the grandeur because you're having to see through the bugs. And you don't even always notice how grimy that windshield has gotten until you stop and clean it and you're like, "Oh my gosh, wow. I've been missing out. Like clean your glasses." I'm functioning and I'm able to see the road, but I'm missing so much because of all the stuff that's gotten between us. And generally it's all the little things that get between us. If it's a real big splat, you're going to stop because it's right in your way, and it's blocking your view, and it's kind of like those mortal sins. We notice those; it's pretty hard to miss a mortal sin. You know in your heart that you're just on the wrong path; you've screwed this one up. But a lot of time those little sins build up too, until the whole windshield is just kind of grimy, and you're missing out on what God has in store for you, what He wants to share with you. So Reconciliation, or the Sacrament of Confession, is a chance for restoration. It's a chance to restore harmony, to reunite with God, to clean the windshield, and clear the slate. And sometimes it's so hard to want to admit where we've screwed up and where we've let all those little things build up because it's kind of embarrassing, like "How long did I let my car windshield go before I actually dealt with this problem?" Well, sometimes we hide from God too, and we just let life continue building up on us, instead of stopping and saying, "Okay, what's my regular... check the oil, get the gas, wash the windshield." Those things are the sacraments for us. We go to mass regularly; we receive the Eucharist; we pray daily; we check the air in the tires; we check in with God in our daily prayer, but we also need those times of confession, or in our personal prayer time, of really examining our conscience and saying, "Okay, I'm going to fess up and face up, and say this is the stuff that I need to get rid of or address with God," and say, "Let's work on this together." We have some examinations of conscience that we brought because sometimes it's hard to ask the right questions. It's easy to just go through life and you kind of know what you need to be thinking about but you just get busy. So an examination of conscience is just a different way of stopping and taking measure, and saying, "Okay, where am I doing good? Where do I need some work? Where do I need to clean the windshield?" And then go get that taken care of. One thing that I read when I was preparing for this that I really liked was that an examination of conscience is not just to make you feel bad and say where you screwed up. But it's a way to form your conscience to say what could I be doing to draw closer to God? What could I be doing to become holier, to really walk in grace, to walk in

love with other people and with God and with myself? And if I'm doing those things well, God will do so much more in my life because I've opened the pathway. I can see through the clean windshield. So that's our goal, not to beat ourselves up but it's to have the right heart that sometimes needs to say, "Oh God, I'm a sinner. I messed up and I want to come back to you." And God will just love... He'll say, "Let's go! I've been waiting for you. Ready? Let's go." So let's make Lent a time to "Let's go."

WORD OF WISDOM

This is not just singing; this is praying through song. We're letting our hearts speak to the Lord through song. And when we do this, the scripture says that the Lord inhabits the praises of His people, so we can expect that to happen, that the Holy Spirit will come and touch our hearts, and enable us to move closer to the Lord. He does a work in our hearts of conversion, of healing, of whatever we need.

PRAYER

Your love never ends, Lord Jesus. And we ask You to pour forth, Lord, and I know You're doing that tonight, but give us the ability to receive it – as a people loved by You. It doesn't make any difference what we've done; it doesn't make any difference at all. We can't make You love us any less; we can't make You love us any more. You just love us. Glory to You, Jesus. Praise Your holy name. Walk among us, Lord. There's nothing more powerful than the holy name of Jesus. We're to lift His name on high. Lord, help us to do it from the depths of our being.

PRAYER

Jesus, we do lift Your name on high. We praise and exalt Your holy name, for You alone are worthy. Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb, worthy the holy risen Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We do praise You and exalt You and magnify Your holy name. Just teach us to praise You better, we pray. And just teach us to praise You with a heart full of praise and with a spirit that would have that attitude of gratitude, that seeks to come before You, come before You. And we praise and exalt and magnify Your name. For You alone are worthy. You're worthy of honor and worthy of glory and worthy of all praise. Halleluiah to the Lamb! Halleluiah to the holy risen Lamb of God! We praise You and exalt You and magnify Your name.

SHARING

The first time Chuck and I ever heard that song played was at a big conference in Pittsburgh I believe it was. And you guys did a great job on it because there was probably a thousand people singing that song and all you could see was the face of God. So every time we sing that song, I just want to go "You, O Lord, of life eternal" – because it's just so happy. We're going to

see the face of love. We're going to see God, the face of love. So just keep that in mind when we sing that.

CONFIRMATION

Whenever Jimmie gets up and does an exhortation about the throne of the Lord, that song is in my brain. So confirmation.

CONFIRMATION / SCRIPTURE

I received this scripture today, just this evening, and it confirms what Deacon Chuck said and what Cece said. From **Baruch 5:1-5**: *Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery. Put on for ever the splendor of glory from God. Wrapped in the mantle of justice from God, place on your head the diadem of the glory of the eternal one. For God will show your splendor to all under the heavens. You will be named by God for ever, the peace of justice, the glory of God's worship. Rise up, Jerusalem, stand upon the heights; look to the east and see your children gathered from east to west at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that they are remembered by God.*

PRAYER

You number us, O Lord, and call each of us by name. You look deep into our hearts and know who we are, and You love us.

SHARING / IMAGE / SCRIPTURE / CONFIRMATION

As that song just said, "Speak to my heart" and last week the Lord did. And there are just some things that He... anyway, it just makes me so happy, I want to share it with you guys. I left last week... towards the end we sang the song "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," but I went in to Adoration with these words going through my mind, humming it kind of, thinking about this. "Jesus, lover of my soul, Jesus, I will never let you go. You've taken me from the miry clay, set my feet upon a rock and now I know. I love you; I need you." So that was going through my head when I went in there and it wasn't too much longer when I had this image of Jesus, and He was walking on stepping stones. They were like the stones in the bed of a river but He wasn't in a river. There was just space; there wasn't ground or anything but just the stones. And they were set up so that some were spaced close together and some were a little bit farther apart, and they were in a jagged line. But He was walking on these stones and being very firm about it, not slipping or any of that. And so I'm thinking, okay, "set my feet upon a rock" and now Jesus is walking on stones – is there a connection? I was trying to think of what He was trying to say to me, and I came up with some things but I knew it was just me trying to, you know, figure this out. So I prayed to Him and said, "Please let me know what You're trying to tell me or show me or whatever." And He did! He took me to the book of **Joshua, chapters 3 and 4**, and this is after the Israelites had escaped from Egypt; Moses has died and Joshua is in charge and they come to the River Jordan. And the Lord tells them... I mean, the Ark of the

Covenant was with them, so He says, "Take the Ark of the Covenant into the river", and you know that was the presence of God. So they had a priest from each of the twelve tribes carry the Ark into the River Jordan and the water stopped flowing so that all of the people could cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land on dry ground. And then He told them to take the stones of the river that the priests had been standing on... so the presence of God is basically on this foundation of stones just like Jesus walking on the stones, God on the stones. The priests were to take these stones and build a memorial, and it said that they did it on the shore but they also took more of the stones that the priests had been standing on and made a memorial in the middle of the Jordan River. And after that, in the next day or two, I went home and just read different commentaries on this, and so I'm just going to read some things from the commentaries to you guys because they say it better than I could but it just confirms so many of the things that we've been talking about lately. "The people were to follow the Ark and we must also walk after the Word and the direction in which the Spirit is leading us in everything. And through our whole journey, faith is there that we can see the prints of the Redeemer's feet who trod the very path to glory and bids us to follow him. This is a repeat of the miracle of the Red Sea and it shows us that God has the power and will keep his people." We've been talking about miracles here and apparently at this time the Jordan had overflowed all of its banks because it was harvest time; they must have had lots of rain, but since it was a much larger river than it normally was, "this magnified the power of God and his kindness to his people. It foreshadows our passage from wandering the wilderness (which is the sinful world that we live in), to crossing the river over into the Promised Land (or life in heaven). The stones were set up as a memorial so that the people could teach their children about the great things God has done. The work of God cannot be forgotten. Faith of future generations is weak because they've never been told of how great God is and how real His working is in our lives." The reason why we give these praise reports... well, let me just finish here. "We don't remember the past great works of God so that we can live in a dreamland of the past, thinking that the best days of our Christian experience are behind us. We remember them as a point of faith so that we can trust God for greater and greater works in the future because we have seen and experienced His past faithfulness. And the rocks were set up as a memorial so that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord so they would know that there is a God who works miracles." You know, part of our journey on these stones is what we tell people. We need to tell them of the miracles in our lives. We need to point out how God has worked in our lives; we keep saying that what we need to share with people is our story, how God has changed our lives. So I think that's what this whole thing was trying to tell me, and there's a song, "you've taken me from the miry clay", there must be a psalm where that comes from because I actually came across another song that has pretty much those same words. "He placed me upon a strong rock by His side. My steps were established and here I'll abide. No danger of falling while here I remain, but stand by His grace until the crown I gain." And we've been talking about His grace lately too. But just some things that I pulled from this group; two weeks ago someone said, "It's good to remember when you've encountered God in

your life and write those things down.” Those are the things we need to share; it’s a memorial. We remember those things and share them so that people do believe there is a God and He does do miracles and we need to consider what great things He has done for us. Another message in tongues was, “This is a breath of my grace, the grace that I give to you to others.” So again, this goes back to the grace that was mentioned in these commentaries about the river passing. And then another thing I was thinking of is when Mel said, and I think this was last week, and it kind of goes back to the “don’t hesitate – walk” and then Mel said it’s like you go outside to take a walk and you see the sunset or the sunrise and it’s beautiful and you just stop and look. It was kind of compared to what we do here but we have to continue the walk. Well, the path is laid out, the steps are there, the stepping stones, the things that God has done in our lives and how to cross over from a sinful world into heaven on earth, and I was thinking that a lot of times we talk about that river, and I’ve done this, that the point is to get into the river and then let the current just take you. I mean, that’s kind of a very passive activity. It feels great, you know, if you consider God your navigator and all the blessings and everything, but maybe we were meant to cross that river and walk on those stones and not stop where it feels good. Walk – don’t hesitate – don’t stop and just look at the sunset. Have that be your experience to actually walk. I don’t know. To me, it was just very... Jesus has just been sharing some really great things with me lately and I just thank Him so much. But I did want to share that with you too.

WORD OF WISDOM / PRAYER

The image as it’s laid out, the stones on the bank, are a witness and a testimony of what God has done in our lives. It’s a witness and a testimony, and a witness and a testimony are not to be kept to ourselves. That’s why sometimes we witness here what’s being said, and it’s really important that we witness to what God is speaking to our hearts as we walk before God in purity of heart and in Jesus. In the Old Testament, there’s a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day so we would know which way to go, we would know which way to go to follow God, to follow after God all the days of our lives. And that’s the only way we’re going to know which way to go is to follow God and to follow the cloud and the pillar of His presence. And we’re not just seeking His presence to feel good. We want to worship God but we want to follow the cloud and the presence of God so we know which way to go, and He wants us to follow Him. He wants us to follow Him, that’s why He called us, because He wants us to follow Him. Father, we thank You and praise You and exalt Your holy name. For You alone are worthy. You’re worthy of all honor, worthy of all glory, worthy of all praise. We exalt Your holy name, O Lord.

SENSE / SHARING / SCRIPTURE

Before we leave tonight, I think the Lord would have us know this. We sang about waiting on the Lord, wait, wait, wait on Him. But I don’t think we always realize that the Lord is waiting on us, that He wants, and does, make Himself available to us every second of the day. And

because we live in this crazy world, full of distractions, and we're pulled here and there and everywhere, many times when I get to the end of the day, and then it's, "Oh, yah, Lord, thank You for today" or "Help me with tomorrow" or whatever. But in **Isaiah 40:31**, it says: *But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.* So I think many times, even in my own life when I get a bit weary and stuff, that's because maybe I'm trying to shoulder it all myself, instead of remembering that the Lord is waiting on me to come to Him. And He won't leave me; He'll be there for me no matter what. But oh does He delight in us! He delights in us remembering who He is and what He can do for us and to praise Him and to thank Him and just ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of Him every moment of the day, even in the little things, the big things, the things that are bothering us, the things that give us joy. And so He is waiting and sometimes we have to wait on Him for His timing and all of that, but waiting on Him, we know that He is also a God who loves us and is waiting on us.

PRAYER

And so, Lord, let Your praise ever be on our lips. And gathered here we thank You. We thank You for Your word to us tonight, for Your holy presence, for Your love poured forth, and for Your promise to be with us as we go forth from this place as emissaries of Your great love. O Jesus, O Jesus, we love You.

TEACHING ON THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Something I meant to mention in my talk and I forgot is that the grace of the Sacrament of Confession or Reconciliation is showing up. It's being obedient to say, "I'm going to ask for forgiveness because God has called me to do that." The blessing of the Sacrament of Confession is that the grace continues after you leave the confessional. Oftentimes they just want a very short list; it's not a time for spiritual counseling; it's not a time for spiritual direction; it's time for confession. But then God works with all that stuff that came up, that you presented, and He forgives you for it. And then He continues to heal you of that as you go forth.