

INSPIRED WORD

March 7, 2018

EXHORTATION / PRAYER / REVIEW

I think what we should do first is take the burdens which we have in our heart and we're just going to give them to the Lord right now. Lord, You call us together to praise Your name, to give You honor and glory and thanksgiving. And we're here for that, Lord. But you know, Lord, some of us carry burdens, the burdens that we try to lay down but sometimes we can't, Lord. They're just too heavy for us. So we ask You to lift those, Lord, lift those from our shoulders, lift those from our body, lift those from our mind, Lord. And take them, Lord, because we place them at Your feet. Just take them away, Lord, take them away for the time we're here to praise You. And Lord, for the burdens in this basket, we ask You to look upon them and answer them according to Your holy will. Thank You, Lord. Okay, over the last several weeks, the Lord has given us some powerful messages in this community. And I'm not going to go through each and every line, each and every word, but I just let the Lord touch me with the paragraph from two weeks ago and a paragraph from last week, just to see if we can let that word sink in, because what we're trying to do is draw closer to our first love, to draw closer to the love we experience with the Lord Jesus Christ when we first encountered Him, that love that sparked the fire. That's what we're trying to do this Lent. And that takes some effort on our part. But when we listen to these words of encouragement that are given to us as a community, we should be elated because the one thing that stands out in these messages is that the Lord is not speaking in any generalities. He's speaking specifically to each and every one of us, and He wants us to know that. And this is from two weeks ago... He said, "Come, my beloved, come." Now remember that the Lord is speaking to you; He's speaking to me; He's speaking to Cecelia and Janice and Dan and Marilyn and each and every one of us personally. He says, "Come, my beloved, come. Let your hunger be quenched by my love." By His love. "Let your thirst be quenched by my love. Come, my beloved ones, come. Hear me in your heart for I am speaking to you one by one. I'm speaking to you one by one." That doesn't mean anybody's excluded, does it? It doesn't mean that He's speaking to Phyllis and not to me. "I am speaking to you one by one." And then He said, "You are special to me. You are special to me. Each one, one by one, is special to me. You, yes, you who question, you who worry, you who are in pain, you who are lonely, it is you that I say to come, my beloved, come." We're trying to draw closer to our first love. What else could He say to stir our heart? What else can He say to stir our mind? What else can He say to make it clearer for us to understand that it's not a message in generalities, that it's a message of love and hope and concern for each and every one of us? "So you who worry, you who are in pain, you who are lonely, it is you that I say come, my beloved, come." Our first love is calling us back to Him. And last week we experienced the breath of this God, the breath of this God on each one of us. He said again, "Yes, my beloved, indeed I have breathed upon you tonight. I have breathed the love of my Father for you." Not

only the love of Jesus but the love of His Father. “I have breathed my love for you and I have breathed the love of the Spirit who walks with you daily. This is a breath of life, not a breath of sorrow. This is a breath of joy, not a breath of sadness. This is a breath that through you gives life to others.” Who’s the you? It’s us, because remember He was saying each and every one, one by one. “It is you that I want to use to bring my breath of life to others.” So we’re trying to draw closer to this God, our first love. But He sure is reaching out His hand to each one of us and saying, “You know, you’re reaching out to me but this is who you’re really reaching out to, a love which can’t be described, a love that can’t be put into words, a love that can’t be hidden, a love that can’t be put down.” This is the God who’s talking to us and is telling us that He wants us to draw closer to Him. And before I go on with that, I want to hold up our journals. Have you been putting anything in your journal? Has the Lord been touching you with anything in particular? Perhaps the Lord has touched you with something that you want to share.

SCRIPTURE / SHARING / EXHORTATION

The Lord has definitely touched me with something I want to share and it’s exactly what you were talking about. Just the other day I was going through the four Gospels; I was looking at a particular event in the Gospels, and Matthew, Mark and Luke all had the same event but John had something totally different. And so I spent some time reading in John and it’s at the Last Supper, or the First Eucharistic Supper, and it’s after Jesus washed the feet of the apostles and Judas Iscariot left; and then there are like four chapters where Jesus is just sharing with the apostles. He’s telling them that He was going to be leaving them but He wouldn’t abandon them; He’s reassuring them and encouraging them, and this is also where He says this beautiful thing: *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you”* (**John 15:12-14**). You know, if we don’t include, when we’re describing who Jesus is, if we don’t say friend... He’s our Lord, He’s our Savior, He’s our King, He’s our Prince of Peace, but if we don’t say He’s our friend, we need to get closer because that’s a personal relationship is when you can call Jesus your friend. That is important to drawing closer to the heart of Jesus but that’s not the key thing that I found. Okay, so He has this nice long discussion with His apostles, or mostly He’s doing the talking, but in **John 17:1**, it says: *When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come.”* And He starts saying a prayer to His Father for the apostles, and He’s asking His Father to sanctify them, to guard them, to be with them. He says, *“I do not pray that you should take them out of the world but that thou should keep them from the evil one”* (**John 17:15**). So He’s saying this beautiful prayer for His eleven apostles. And then in verse **20**, He says this, *“I do not pray for these only (these meaning the eleven), but also for those who believe in me through their word.”* The footnote says this is the church. The church is you and me. So basically He’s saying this prayer for us that lasts for eternity. He’s saying this prayer to His Father for you and I personally. Just listen to this. *“I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as*

you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we, Father, are one. I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known you, but I have known you; and these know that you have sent me. I have made known to them your name, and I will make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them”

(John 17:20-26). Now, to make something more personal, or to draw closer to the heart, we need to make it more personal. So I'm going to change the words just a little bit; I'm going to read it again. "I do not pray for these (the apostles) only, Father, but also for those in the praise and worship community of Holy Apostles Church who believe in me through the word, that this community may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that this community may also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory which you have given to me I have given to this community, that they may be one even as we are one, Father, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved this community even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known you, but I have known you; and this community knows that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." To draw even closer, to make it even more personal, I would suggest that each one of you go to John 17, starting with verse 20 through the end of the chapter and put your name in there. For example, the last line would then be, for me: "I made known to Denise your name, Father, and I will make known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in her, and I in her." I just can't believe that Jesus is praying to His Father for me. I mean, it's just beautiful and if that doesn't draw you closer... I don't know. It just blew me away.

SHARING / EXHORTATION

Isn't it interesting that Denise should talk about that chapter and verse because the Lord Jesus, as He was praying then, was not only thinking of the apostles, He was thinking of me and you and Chuck and Barb and Dan and everybody. He knew us even then whether we want to believe that or not. He knew us even then and the words that He's given to this community are similar words to those. We want to draw closer to the Lord during this Lenten season. I want to share with you something that I encountered this past weekend that really touched me, and I shared this with our scripture study group yesterday. And it was from a priest who obviously had gone back and found his first love. My wife and I were up at Fort Collins at our daughter's house and we had the opportunity to go to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Church on Sunday morning. The priest gave a wonderful homily, and at the end of his homily he said, "The mobile confessional van is now operational." And he went on to explain that he is making himself available to every person in his parish, no matter where they are, no matter what time of the day, no matter what time of the night, he will meet them for reconciliation. He said his goal was to bring as many people as possible in that parish to the sacrament of reconciliation to experience the love of God. Now there's a man who's found his first love, because it sounds to me like he's saying, "I'm putting my life on hold. There's nothing more important than this. This is what the Lord wants me to do to show you how much He loves you, and if this is what I have to do, I'm going to do it." And his voice had such commitment in it, you knew that he wasn't speaking in generalities. His word went to the heart of the people who were there who were listening to him. We have several weeks left to draw closer to our first love, to draw back to that feeling. God wants us to have a loving, fiery relationship with Him. He doesn't want us to sit on the sideline; He wants to use each and every person here. But He wants us to be used by Him out of love. He wants us to take the same love that Denise just told us about, that she's obviously experiencing... you can tell from her voice... and to bring it to somebody we don't know, somebody who is hurting, somebody who is in pain, somebody who is down. We can all make an excuse for not doing that but the Lord said, "I am speaking to you one by one." And this is the God we've come to praise tonight; this is the God who's here right now; this is the God who wants to hear our voice, even if you're like me and you're going to start coughing any minute, He wants to hear that voice, because He created that voice. He knew what our voice sounded like on the day we were born, even before, and He wants us to use that voice to praise Him, to worship Him, and to draw closer to Him. Amen.

PRAYER

Glory to you, Lord. We're just asking You tonight what You want to do to draw us close to You, to trust in You. Glory and praise to You, Jesus.

CONFIRMATION / PRAYER

And what a beautiful response in song to the scripture that Denise read, that the Lord wants to be our friend. Call us close, Lord, tonight, call us close. We want to come close. Help us to lay down our fears and those things that prevent us from coming close, any distractions we might have. Help us to look to You, O Jesus. You beckon. Praise Your holy name, Lord.

CONFIRMATION

Do you think it's just coincidence that those songs have gone along with that scripture reading? That's not coincidence, that's a message, a big exclamation point from the Lord tonight for us. Amen.

SCRIPTURE / PRAYER

Psalm 95:2-7: *Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving; we shout joyfully to him with songs! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are his also. The sea is his for he made it; for his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Father, we just praise and exalt You and magnify Your holy name. For You alone are worthy. Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb, worthy is the Lamb, the holy risen Lamb of God who has brought us into His presence, who has brought us here tonight to worship Him, to come before His holy presence. We praise You and exalt You and magnify Your name, for You alone are worthy. Worthy, worthy, worthy, worthy of all praise, worthy of all honor and worthy of all glory. We do praise You and exalt You and magnify Your holy name. For You are indeed the holy Lord, the holy Lord of all, and we praise You and exalt Your holy name. Worthy, worthy, worthy are You, O Lord. Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb.*

PRAYER

Come, Holy Spirit. Let's just ask Him from our hearts. Come, Holy Spirit. Let's invite Him. Come, Holy Spirit, come. Gift of the Father and the Son, come. Come and fill this temple, this house. Come, Holy Spirit, come. Touch every heart. Come and have Your way tonight, Lord, in this place. Come, Holy Spirit, come. We open our hearts to You. We open the doors to You - come.

SENSE / SCRIPTURE

Just before we prayed that song, the Lord was bringing to mind the scripture from the prophet Jeremiah, and I think He's saying, "You are seeking me with all of your heart" as we prayed in that song. And in **Jeremiah 29:11-12**, He says, *"I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for. Then you will call to me; you will come and pray to me and I will answer you."* And then this is the beautiful verse (**Jeremiah 29:13-14**): *"You will seek me and you will find me, because you will seek me with all your heart. Yes, I say, you will find me."*

CONFIRMATION

I have to confirm what Barb shared. I've been working on trust this Lent and when I was singing that song, I realized that the more I seek His face, the more I realize how mighty He is. And the more I realize how mighty He is, I realize how much bigger He is than any problem that I have. And then I can move; I can trust; I can do what He wants me to do.

MESSAGE IN TONGUES

INTERPRETATION

Have you heard me call your name? Have you heard me call your name this night? I have called you by name, and I have called you friend, but by name I have called you. And now I say to you, it is time for you to know that I am the God Almighty. I am the God who goes with you wherever you go, and I will call you to the places where I need you, whether it be in your home, in the store, to the hospital, just wherever you are called, know that I go with you. Know that I am the Lord Almighty. I have a heart for my people, a heart that is breaking now for them to know my love. You know my love. Let that love flow through you. Let that love flow out of you to my people who are starved for my love.

CONFIRMATION / SCRIPTURE

I confirm that interpretation. Before the word was spoken, I had opened my bible to **Isaiah 43:1-2**: *Do not be afraid; I will save you. I have called you by name. You are mine. When you pass through the deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through the fire, you will not be burned. Your hard trials will come but will not hurt you.* And at the very end of that is **(43:5)**: *Do not be afraid, I am with you.*

INTERPRETATION

Anytime, anywhere, I am waiting for you. Love one another.

CONFIRMATION

And I confirm that word and the interpretation. Prior to Mel speaking the word, the song “Be Not Afraid” was going through my mind.

SENSE

For awhile I had just a few words running through my mind: Do not hesitate, do not hesitate, do not hesitate – walk.

SHARING / PRAYER

This week and several weeks before the Lord has impressed on me to an increased prayer life during this season. And I just happened to open to this reflection from the Inspired Word from February 7th, sometime back. It’s the prayer: “Lord, it is You Who transforms us; it is You Who makes us holy. It is You Who pours into our hearts Your fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, meekness and gentleness – all of those things that are necessary for us to shine forth the holy Presence of Jesus. Lord, we pray for that holiness, that transformation that only You can bring about in each one of us, Lord. Lord, make us holy as we say “Yes” to You. Yes, yes, have Your way in us, lead and guide us, make known to us what we should do. Lord, tell me who I should talk to this day, tell me where I should go, tell me who I should minister to, tell me to whom I need to speak the truth, tell me to whom I need to show compassion. O Lord, make me holy, make us holy!” God supplies and trains us with this extraordinary power to be used now.

Lord, thank You for bringing us to this place where each one of us needs to hear the things that You want us to hear. And we thank You and praise You and exalt Your holy name.

CONFIRMATION / IMAGE / SENSE

I've been praying over the word since Chuck spoke and I don't remember them all but he said something like, "Do not hesitate, do not hesitate, do not hesitate – walk". And when he spoke those words, the image that came to me is... I'm by myself and I'm thinking that I'll go for a walk. And I open the door outside and start going for a walk and I'm confronted with the most beautiful sunset that I've ever seen. And I'm so in awe of the sunset that I stand there and look at it and forget that I was going to go for a walk. And the sense that came to me is that that's what the Lord is saying to us. "You come here and you experience me and you're so in awe of me that you say, 'Wow! How wonderful. I think I'll just stay here and admire it.'" And we forget the second part of this message. He says, "I have breathed on you so that you can go and breathe on others." He doesn't invite us, I don't think, when He says, "Come here, my beloved, come here. Come here and sit on my lap and just stay here." Or the song we just sang... "What a beautiful dance. I think I'll just stand here and dance." See, we're not intended to dance by ourselves. We're supposed to go out and find a partner to dance with. And the Lord is saying to us, I believe, "Yes, be in awe of me. But take what you have experienced, what you have seen, what you have heard, and find someone to share it with. Be in awe of the sunset, but don't forget to walk. Be in awe of my love, but don't keep it to yourself. Take it out and find somebody to share it with."

SENSE / EXHORTATION

Every time I hear that praise song, it sticks in my mind that as we sing it to the Lord, He's singing those words right back to us. Now just imagine that for a second. The Lord is saying, "You're all I want, Dan, you're all I ever needed. Help me to know that you're near. Help me to know that I'm your first love. Help me know that you're drawing closer to me." This was a very powerful night. When we have the opportunity to reflect on all the words that were said, I know again that the Lord is saying... when He said, "Let my love flow through you and let my love flow out of you", He spoke to each one of us. And that's what He's been doing and He's continuing that story. "Let my love flow through you and let my love flow out of you, because you're all I want, you're all I need to take my love to somebody else." We need to ponder the words that He gives to us, not just read, but ponder them. We have our journals and we can reflect on those words in here to help us grow closer to Him. But it's a very important message when He says, "Let my love flow through you; let my love flow out of you. Don't keep it, don't hide it, don't let it be bogged down by the burdens of this world. Don't let the worries you have stop you from sharing it. But instead, take that love and give it away, because you're all I want and you're all I ever need." How many people in our life do we know that need to hear that? One, five, ten, a hundred? How many have such a sorrow that they're carrying, they don't know that the Lord is telling them how much He loves them? And if we don't speak it, they may

never hear it. And that's what I believe He's telling us tonight. And we praise and we thank You for that, Lord.