

“The Prayer Closet”

July 29, 2012

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying that:

Lois McMartin and EFCA ReachGlobal Ministries: the Spirit will gift Lois with strength for travel and wisdom for counsel as she travels overseas to missionary families; the Lord will raise up both short term and career missionaries for worldwide missions; the recently announced changes in personnel and the refocusing of charitable and home missions will prove effective for advancing the kingdom of God’s righteousness

President Obama: open his mind for wisdom in the exercise of America’s power internationally; he will distinguish clearly between truth and error, good and evil, wisdom and folly; he will be preserved in good health and will preserve the peace of the nation

Board of Trustees: that they will bring to successful conclusion the various remodeling, maintenance and facility repair projects before the start of the school year; they will work as a team and enjoy the active support of the congregation

Military or Public Service Personnel of the Week: Jeremiah Gonzales (husband of Jennifer): soon to be switching shifts due to personnel reduction from budget cuts, please pray for safety and security at work and that all continue to run smoothly

Young Adult of the Week: Alysia Ballantyne at William Jessup (daughter of John and Cheryl): encouragement and support starting the new school year, for finances to work out

Please pray for the health and recovery of our church family: Carol Bernerd, Al Billington, Bob Boettcher, Diane Kinnamont, LaVerne Lee, Dick & Jane Miller, Cindy Rodney

(please call the office to request updates to this list)

If your house was on fire and you only had time to run in and grab one thing, what would it be? Now, among us the “right” answer is “my Bible.” I am not mocking the Word of God – never – but you know what, there are just stacks of Bibles all over the place. I don’t need to grab my Bible. But what do I want to grab? There would be a variety of ways we might want to respond to that. Some people would say “I would grab my family photos”. That would be a good choice, or other personal mementos that can’t be replaced. A new couch? Big deal, you can get a new couch. So what are the things that rise to the top of your priority list when you think about the things that are in your home that if you could you would make sure you kept them? This is designed, of course, for us to prioritize. I would hope that if there was a living member of the family in the house you would want to... Some things we treasure and we don’t want to lose them. That is the title of the message today: “Things Treasured”. What do I treasure?

If you remove the urgency of crisis then the options, the spectrum of things that you treasure broadens, because some things you need more time to grab hold of if you have the opportunity. Do you want to know what I would really grab? How many of you know? It would be my computer. Why? Probably 80% of my life is poured into those files.

What we treasure says much about who we are, and it reveals the disposition of our souls. That is very much to the point if you turn in John’s Gospel chapter 11 and look at verses 11:45-12:26, in this chapter we have a number of snapshots, little pictures of what different people treasured as they were impacted, as their lives were affected by the presence and the ministry of Jesus Christ. These verses are transitional from the account of Jesus’ ministry as He travelled about in the land of Israel and now – if you are familiar with the Gospel of John – when you get to the thirteenth chapter, we begin what are called the Upper Room discourses. That is when Jesus is done with His public ministry and He concentrates on talking to and preparing His immediate disciples, the twelve, for His departure. There is a shift that is going to occur in the ministry of Jesus as you follow in the Gospel of John. This is the transitional section. I will read this section and then make a few comments that will hopefully be helpful. We begin at verse 45.

“Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, [Jesus had just raised Mary’s brother Lazarus from the dead: that is the background] believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, ‘What are we going to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.’ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.’ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.

“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, ‘What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?’ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

“Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, who Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining

with him at the table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ‘Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. Jesus said, ‘Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.’”

“When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came not only account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus. The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.”

That is the account. As I said, these verses, all of chapter 12 in fact, will be transitional from the public ministry of Jesus, the ministry He has to the population of all of Israel, and the ongoing dialogue that He has with the Pharisees and the scribe, and instead He is going to move and concentrate on His own followers. We see here, going back to verses 45f in chapter 11, once again the Jews are divided in how they respond to Jesus: some believe, we are told many believe, but those who were in positions of power, who were at the levers that control society were deeply threatened; seeing the increasing popularity of Jesus, the increasing number of people who were running after Him, they decide that it is time to do something. It is time to get rid of Him.

These words are telling and John meant them to be. Here is the thematic background for this whole section. Jesus made this comment in Matthew 6:33, *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...”* A little earlier Jesus had made this comment in the great sermon that Matthew recorded for us (Matthew 6:19-21), *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal, for where your treasure is, your heart will be also.”* It is quite obvious when you read the account in just this small section in chapter 11 moving into chapter 12 that the hearts of the ruling elite were firmly embedded in the world. The ruling elite sees the nation and their position in the nation as inseparable from each other as the top priority. But there is something to notice about what they have to say. Notice that in their comments, the comments made by Caiaphas himself, no mention is made of God. For those men, it is Rome that determines their future. It is Rome that is the bottom line, because Rome has the power. Whether or consciously or not they use religion as the means for social position, prestige and power. They were for the most part faithless men with corrupted hearts. It is a constant theme of scripture that wealth and power corrupt men’s souls. We ought to be reflective on that. Many who set out for good purposes have ended up slaves to what they thought would enable them to achieve great goals. By the way, that principle applies equally at any level of society. You do not have to go to Washington [D.C.] to be corrupted by the wealth and power that may be put in your hands. We should be constantly asking the Spirit of God to review us and evaluate us and say, “You are entrusting many things into my hands: am I able and willing to release them to You for Your purposes, or am I becoming the slave of the gifts that You have given me?” That, of course, is the point that Jesus is making when He says we are to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness.

Now as we read this, there is something important for us to keep clearly in mind, and that is that the fact of humanity being fallen is no impediment to the rule of God. John demonstrates this by quoting the words of Caiaphas the High Priest; you can find them there in the concluding section of chapter eleven of John’s Gospel. Caiaphas was utterly apostate, but we are told what Caiaphas had to say was given to him by God. If it were God’s pleasure, Putin would speak God’s words. This is what we read in chapter 11:49-52; they are the words of Caiaphas. *“But one of them, Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all.*

Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.’ [This is John’s comment:] He did not say his of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”

At this point as we are following the drama of this conflict between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees, we see that the resolve to assassinate Jesus is settled at the highest levels of the religious establishment. The members of the Sanhedrin or the ruling council are now agreed: “We are going to take action and get rid of this man.” They are, in other words, ready to fulfill the part which God has foreordained and predestined that they will fulfill. If you think that is a bit of a strange statement, turn to Acts 4:27-28, because at that point we hear the apostles in prayer and this is the observation that they make: *Truly in this city [that was Jerusalem] there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, [now here is the key section] to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place.”* So Caiaphas speaks the words which the Lord God has given to him to speak, and we now discover that the actions taken by the Sanhedrin and those under their control are the actions which the Lord God had determined they would take before they were taken. That obviously raises some serious questions.

Jesus of course is aware of their resolve. You might recall if you were here before that when Jesus went to Bethany in order to raise Lazarus from the dead, He went openly. In fact it disturbed the apostles because they said, “Jesus, not long before they were trying to stone You! Are you going to just going to walk back? (Bethany was only two miles from Jerusalem.) Jesus’ response was, “there are twelve hours in the day. When it is light, basically a man who obeys God will not stumble”. So He walks openly right into the [village] of Bethany. Now we are told that He changes His manner of behaving and He gets out of Bethany, goes to the wilderness to a town called Ephraim. John 11:55-57 sets the scene that we need to appreciate as we are watching this transition in Jesus’ ministry. The objective is to bring Jesus to Jerusalem where He will die on a cross. The city is in a state of heightened anticipation. The common people were hoping that Jesus would come to the great Passover Feast: we read that in the text. “Will He come; do you think He will be here?” we are told. Some have come down from Galilee. They have been exposed either personally or heard of the miracles that Jesus has performed. There is a high level of excitation: will He be here? In the meantime on the other side the ruling council, the scribes and Pharisees have said, “If anybody sees Him he is to let us know so that we can go and get Him when He is separated from the crowd.” There is your drama, the dynamic forces that are at play.

In John 12:1-11 as we work our way through the chapter one thing to notice is that Jesus is at all times fully in charge of the events. Watch what Jesus does: He left Bethany, He has hidden in the wilderness. Now what does Jesus do? You’re a hunted man. You know they are out to get you. So what He does is He comes boldly back into Bethany, and when He comes to Bethany the family of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, hold a big feast. They are two miles away from Jerusalem. Who is the other person at the feast? It is Lazarus, a man who has been raised from the dead. Do you think the scribes and Pharisees heard about this? It is absurd. It would be like putting up a gigantic neon sign saying “Jesus is here, Jesus is here: take note: Here’s Jesus!” How would it have made [the members of the Sanhedrin] feel? Thousands upon thousands upon thousands of pilgrims are pouring into the city of Jerusalem. Thousands of them have come from the Galilee where Jesus has been feeding them both the bread of heaven and the bread of earth.

That is your big picture: you imagine here is this little town, Jesus is in the house with Lazarus, they are eating a meal and we will get to Mary in a moment. Crowds of pilgrims are streaming back and forth just two miles from the city of Jerusalem. Now let’s go inside the house. Inside the house we see two people who have profoundly different actions or reactions. The first is Mary. Mary performs a remarkable act of worship. She anoints Jesus’ feet with an intensely fragrant and very expensive ointment and she wipes those feet with her hair. Referring to this

event Matthew cites this statement of Jesus, that Mary will be remembered for all time for her generous act of worship. Not only was her action generous, it was shocking. A respectable woman simply did not let her hair down in a public place. Only the lowest of servants would ever touch another person’s feet. This ought to ring bells, because very shortly after this event, what are we all going to watch? We are going to watch the Lord Jesus Christ Himself kneel down and wash the feet of His own disciples. This is a prelude. It was Peter who later on who would say in I Peter 5:6-7, *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because He cares for you.”*

I think that this little episode raises a question for any of us. Who are we and how do we come to worship? I appreciated the comments this morning: do we give out of a proud heart, or a broken one? Deep humility and great generosity in worship do not bring shame to the worshiper; on the contrary it exalts the worshiper because when we are broken and in humility and out of that humility we give with abandon, we have drawn close to God. Any who stand close to God are exalted. We might think of these things for ourselves in considering what our acts of worship say to us about our love for God.

Mary’s act has a foil; if you are familiar with drama or literature you will know that often times in order to emphasize one thing you will put a contrasting opposite: that is the foil. The foil in this case is Judas Iscariot. Mary’s generous self-humiliation in worship is contrasted. John tells us that Judas objected to the waste: “Surely,” he says, “this should have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor.” A denarius was considered to be a day’s wage. This [ointment] is worth almost a year’s worth of work! So you ought to write down and say to yourself, “How much do I earn in a year?” Mary gave that much to Jesus. Hmm. Where am I? As is often the case, with Judas in this case, we have a noble sentiment used to cover a self-serving purpose. “Ho, it should be for the poor,” said Judas. But John says he said it because – and by the way I appreciated one of the commentators who said the word there for “thief” actually means “sneak thief”; so how did the “sneaking” go on? He carried the money bag and whenever he felt the need he would [slyly reach in and take]! Judas’ remarks are rebuked by Jesus, not directly, but by Jesus turning to Mary and saying, “O, what she has done will never be forgotten. It will always be remembered. She worshiped Me.”

This strikes close to home, perhaps, but have you ever wondered – I have on occasion – how often people object to expensive projects in church life in the name of frugality, keeping the money perhaps for missions and the poor, and in fact they simply want to escape any pressure to give? You may consider that a rude question for me to ask, a suggestion for me to make. You are right; it is rude. But sometimes the Spirit of God has to be rude in order to rattle our cage enough so that we realize how we have become more and more comfortable, hiding from what He wants to say.

There is, however, in this passage something deeper for us to reflect upon. Do you think that Jesus was unaware of Judas and his “borrowing” funds? If John knew, Jesus knew. John was favored by Jesus. We spoke of this before. John was the one whom Jesus loved. But Jesus says nothing, and He had done nothing, obviously, to prevent Judas from taking a position which so suited his abilities and his weaknesses. I think you and I need, and it is wise for us to reflect upon this. We need to understand the ways of God, the ways of our Lord Jesus Christ. Judas serves as a kind of microcosm for the larger reality. You and I have to come to grips with the fact that God is under no obligation to protect us from our own weaknesses. I am not saying He won’t; that is grace. I could tell you many tales of grace where God has prevented me from falling into my own weakness. But God is under no obligation to do that. That is why it is grace. The consequence is that Judas freely chooses to do that which gratifies his desire, and God is under no obligation to prevent that from happening. After all, it is not as if Judas was traveling around in low company without any good examples. He had the best of examples, but he still chose to follow his own evil desires.

Coming down to 12:9-11, we read, *“When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.”* That is the content. It is important for us to remember what John nearly always means by the term “Jews”, he is referring to the scribes and Pharisees. He does so in the same way we might refer to “all Americans”: an all-American girl or an all-American guy as those people who are super-devoted to the way of life and the institutions of America. That is what the Pharisees were: super, super committed to the Jewish way of life. That was their great strength and, of course, their great downfall. I thought about this. Sometimes we also refer to “red-necks”. How many of you know what a red-neck is? Don’t tell me! Those are the people who are devoted to the myth of independence. They are gun-toting individualism of the West. They bend to no one! Right. May that be true. What John tells us is that Jesus raising Lazarus from the tomb was having the impact that God desired. So – here is the quote again – *“The chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well.”* If one death is good, two is better! Do you see what is happening to them? When power seeks to protect itself from virtue, it will be more and more deeply corrupted, and resort to any means necessary for self-preservation: don’t ever forget it.

We should not miss the actualization of John’s theme here of the separating power of the gospel. As early as John 1:11 John observed this you might recall: *“Jesus came to His own...”* and how did His own respond? No thanks! But it is really in John 3:16-21 that the theme of the separating power of the gospel is fully articulated by John for his account of the ministry of Jesus. Here it is: you all know the first verse, don’t you. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* Isn’t that a great verse? Have you memorized the rest of the passage? No we don’t, because we don’t want to know it. We do not want to know it: why? Because it reminds us that God is sovereign, in charge. This is what it says: *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment [Do you get the tense? This is; this is what currently stands. This is what is the case.] “the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God.”* I would commend to all of us that we memorize all of those verses so that we do not become confused about the nature and the purposes and the grace of God.

If I am standing before you and I am preaching the Word of God, there is one reason for that being the case. What is that reason? [It is] the grace of God. Had I been left to my own devices, followed my own choices, pursued my own desires and fulfilled my own passions, I would not be standing here, I would not be reading this book, I would not be speaking of the God who saved my soul against my will. But God is gracious. All I have said is personally applying what is written.

In these words John presents the separating power of the gospel in stark terms, but they are no [more] stark than what we read in John 12:9-11. Many Jews, we are told, responding to Jesus, seeing Lazarus raised from the dead, remembering all the miracles and the teachings Jesus has given, many Jews came to faith. But some decided to kill Him.

Matthew and Mark lead into their account of Jesus’ Triumphal Entry, which you find in John 12:12ff, by describing Jesus healing one or two blind men as He passed through Jericho. Luke introduces the triumphal entry of Jesus instead by recounting Jesus’ parable of the talents. A man went far away to become the king and he entrusts his property to various of his servants and he says, “Take care these until I come back.” It is fair to see at least this common theme between the three other Gospels and what we read here in John, and it is this: what do people see as real or true? The point of the account [of restoring sight] is that Jesus opens the eyes of the blind. The physically

blind are no more consequentially blind than the spiritually blind. Everybody saw Jesus, but they did not see the same thing. The question is, what is real or what is true? Some as they watch Jesus as He is riding this donkey down into Jerusalem, and they see Him coming as the miracle man who is the healer and the giver of great blessings. But not all: some see Him as a threat. Some see Jesus as being trustworthy, faithful, generous and worth serving to the best of their ability [as in the first two of the three servants in the parable of the talents]; but some do not. Some see Jesus as arbitrary, demanding, and unjust [as with the third of the servants in the parable]. Both kinds are in the church.

The triumphal entry by Jesus into Jerusalem is probably one of the best known events from Jesus' life. It is almost inseparable from the accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is perhaps the single time – this is important – the single time that Jesus explicitly fulfills prophecy regarding the coming of the messiah and does so in order to make clear His identity as the messiah, the One sent by God to save His people Israel. If you have read the gospel, how many times did Jesus ride a donkey? He never rode a donkey. So He gets on a donkey to ride into the city of Jerusalem. What a bizarre thing to do. He never rides a donkey. He doesn't need to ride a donkey into Jerusalem. He has walked in and out of Jerusalem a bunch of times. Why does He ride a donkey? [It is] because he is going to fulfill a prophecy: Zechariah 9:9, *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”* Do you think the crowd noticed? They went wild! The excitement of the crowd hardly needed an explanation. They were eager for Jesus to declare Himself the messianic king. You might recall the story of chapter 6 in John's Gospel, when Jesus had fed the multitude bread what did they want to do? They wanted to come and make Jesus king by force. Now they see it! At last, here He comes. He is on the donkey. He is coming into the city. He is going to be the king! Would you have been excited? By the end of the week things have changed.

The joy of the crowd is matched by the dread of the Pharisees. The crowd says, “At last, Israel will be vindicated!” The crowd says, “At last, the Gentiles are going to be put in their place.” The crowd says, “Every score I want to have settled will now be settled.” The crowd says, “The Miracle man has come and we will be blessed.” And what will the crowd say when no miracles follow?

What the Pharisees and scribes say is, “We've got a heap of problems.” This is not the first man who came to Jerusalem pretending to be the messiah. We forget that. What they see is a fool who is now caught up in the enthusiasm of the crowd, and that enthusiasm is going to lead to action by the Romans, and all will be lost. What the Pharisees dreaded was exactly what God intended. No one reading John's gospel in light of the fulfillment of God's plan for the salvation of the world would miss the significance of some Greeks seeking out Jesus immediately after the Pharisees lament that the whole world is going after [Jesus]. If you haven't, turn over [and] look at John 12:16; *“His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, ‘You see that you are gaining nothing. Look the world has gone after him.’”* The next thing that John writes is, *“Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. These came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus.’”* We wish to see Jesus. Jesus' response is very strange. What would you expect Him to do at that point? “Let me talk to them.” No, read what it says: 12:23-24, *“Jesus says, ‘The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life looses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serve me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.’”*

Do you hear what He says? Truly, truly. Jesus knows exactly what is happening. Jesus opens His eyes and He sees a cross. He looks at these men and He says I want you to understand something: that cross is your destiny. You will go where I am going. That is what offered to us.

Let us pray: Father in heaven, the world shapes our minds and our desires so that they are filled with self-serving and distorted thoughts. Jesus is clear that we cannot remain as the world has made us and also follow Him. But Father, if we don't follow Him, there is no place else to go, for all the world lies under judgment. We therefore, Father, would run to You through Jesus. We would ask that Your Spirit would break us to set us free from the hold of that the world has on us, so that our minds would think right thoughts and our hearts desire right things, and we would delight, we would treasure being your servant and following after what our Lord Jesus has done. Teach us how to do that day by day where we live our lives that others might see and, according to Your good pleasure, might come to know the only One who offers salvation to sinful men. It is, our Father, in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. What do you hold most dear in life such that losing it (or them) would tend to empty life of joy and sap your will to live well?

2. The dinner in Bethany is the setting for Mary, Lazarus’ sister’s generous act of worship. John tells us why this disturbed Judas. He also tells us Jesus’ response. Do you tend to lean toward Mary’s side or toward Judas’? What kinds of “generous acts of worship” can we perform in our day? We naturally think of the dollar cost, but what of the other “costs” Mary paid?

3. What do you think our acts of worship, whether as individuals, as families or as a congregation, reveal about us and our love for God?

4. “God is under no obligation to protect people from their own weaknesses. What Judas freely chose to do, gratifying his desires, Jesus was not obligated to prevent.” Comments?

5. One of John’s themes is that the gospel not only unites the people of God, but it also separates the people of God from the people of the world. Has this been part of your experience of the dynamic of the gospel? What are some examples?

6. How has the gospel, or knowing Jesus, or your growing knowledge of the Word of God changed your way of seeing the world and people in it?

7. What do you think most of our neighbors treasure as that – or those things – which is worth getting excited about?

8. What essential changes would make America a great nation again? How might those changes come to pass? What dangers might attend those changes?

9. Do Jesus’ words in verses 24-26 fit well with your view of Christian faith and life? Do they represent the way most Christians actually think and live?