

Order of Worship for July 3rd, 2011 (Communion and Call2Fall)

Prelude

Pre-Service Song

Welcome and Announcements

Ministry Moment: Military Moms and Ruthie Bowen

Call to Worship: 2 Chronicles 7:11-14

Call2Fall, Prayer for the Nation (I recommend beginning with a song such as “Christ Alone” or “The Deep Love of Jesus” then have a leader read prayer topics one by one from the pulpit with time between for either silent or spontaneous prayer from the congregation. This could as long as it seems right to do. I think you can trust the Spirit’s leading. I would recommend closing with something like #557, “Seekers of Your Heart”, or #563, “Open My Eyes That I May See”

[You may want to incorporate the Call2Fall with the Communion Service. In that case I recommend you have the person administering the elements read the prayer topics and have a season of prayer before proceeding with the prayer for the elements and their distribution]

Offering and Offertory

Message or Communion if not integrated with the Call2Fall. I would consult with Mark L. as to whether he prefers the Communion precede or follow his message. If separate from Call2Fall, to prepare for the Supper you might want to sing either “Jesus Saves” or “Power of the Cross”.

Closing Song

“God Be with You”

Song #232

“The Prayer Closet”

July 3rd, 2011

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”
(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying that:

Richard and Kerry Nakamura: the Lord will refresh them physically, spiritually and emotionally during their home assignment; they will be empowered to strength church ties and support; the Spirit will impart a fresh vision of their call to serve Him in Japan

President Obama: the Spirit will give him a humble heart, a truth perceiving mind and the courage to know and do what is right

Board of Trustees: the Spirit will bring them to unity of mind regarding priorities and time lines for summer projects; the congregation will be led to support them personally and financially; they will experience the Lord’s peace and blessings in their work

Military Personnel of the Week: Sgt Jonathan Sweetman (son of Catherine Sweetman):

Young Adult of the Week: Natalie Rivera (?) (daughter of Bob and Lisa Sanford):

It is a good time of the year to remind ourselves that we do have a rich heritage in this country. I learned something new for the first time when I was looking through different historical things. That picture was painted in 1976 and is called “Prayer at Valley Forge”. That is General Washington. That is depicting an historical event. This event is well documented. It comes from a diary of a Reverend, a Presbyterian minister who recounted a story. In fact there is another picture of that same event. Can you see there is another person in that slide? See over here in the bushes? That is Mr. Isaac Potts. Here is the story that is recounted by this Presbyterian Minister whose name was Reverend Nathaniel Snowden. He recounts the encounter he had with this gentleman, Mr. Isaac Potts. This is what the Reverend recalled and wrote in his diary. “I was riding with Mr. Potts near Valley Forge where the army lay during the war of the Revolution. Mr. Potts, he was a Senator for our state. He was a Whig [one of the political parties: the Whigs were more of the revolutionary party while the Tories were loyal to the British. So he was representing the Whigs. This pastor said,] I told him that I was agreeably surprised to find him a friend of this country as Quakers are mostly Tories. Mr. Isaac Potts said it was so, and, “I was a rank Tory once, for I never believed that America could proceed against Great Britain whose fleets and armies covered the land. But something very extraordinary converted me to the good faith.” “What was it,” I inquired. Mr. Potts said, “Do you see those woods in the plain?” It was about a quarter mile from the place where we were riding. “There” he said, “lay the army of Mr. Washington. It was a most distressing time of the war, and all were for giving up the ship but that one good man. In that woods,” pointing to a close in view, “I heard a plaintive sound [a plaintive sound is expressing sorrow or melancholy or mournful] as a man at prayer. I tied my horse to a sapling and I went quietly into the woods and to my astonishment I saw the great George Washington on his knees alone, with his sword on one side and his cocked hat on the other.” So that is what is depicted in that painting. “He was at prayer to the God of the armies, beseeching to interpose with His divine aid as it was a crisis in the cause of the country, of humanity, of the world. Such a prayer,” Mr. Potts said, “I never heard from the lips of man. I left him alone, praying. I went home and told my wife, ‘I saw a sight and heard today what I never saw or heard before.’ And just related to her what I had seen and heard and observed. We never thought a man could be a Christian and a soldier. But if there was one in the world, it was Washington. We thought it was the cause of God and America would prevail.” So there are some pictures of our history and [they] capture the moment Mr. Isaac Potts observed what is recorded in our history books.

There are some revolutionary quotes that I like, but they are not so spiritual. “More soldiers died by the frying pans than the war wounds.” My children, when I told them that, didn’t really

capture the whole idea. They thought that people went around hitting people with frying pans! The eloquent point that was being made there is that food borne diseases can be pretty hard on people. People you know, (I'm in public health) if you're not really careful the way you cook your food and preserve your food and you handle your food, then of course I like what Benjamin Franklin says, "God heals and the doctor takes the fees." There's some truth to that, isn't there. We pray to God that He would heal and it's just lucky that God... You know we have had a lot of health care in our lives, and I've thought, "These doctors are getting a pat on the back" but God did the work. They just got the pat on the back.

I saw an interesting sign recently. It was a billboard, actually. It was near my home. I am still staggered by this billboard, and maybe you saw it too. This is what it said, "This year thousands of men will die of stubbornness." Now you women stop smiling; I see you out there! You men all knew this. Now what is that all about: thousands of men will die of stubbornness? This is being said by our government. This is put out by the Department of Health and Human Services, the Agency on health care research and quality. What could this be, that men are dying of stubbornness every year? The facts are that men are twenty-four percent less likely than women to have visited a doctor in the past year, had physical in the last year and 22% more likely to have neglected something preventive like a cholesterol test. Men are 28% more likely than women to be hospitalized for congestive heart failure, something that might be prevented if you had gone to see a doctor, and are 32% more likely than women to be hospitalized for long term complications of diabetes, and men are twice as likely as women to have a leg or foot amputated due to complications from diabetes. The point is that men are not getting the care they should, they are not seeing their doctor like they should.

What is the origin of something like that? What is different about men that makes it harder for them to go and see a doctor? Are they too proud? Do they minimize the importance of getting checked up? "O, it's nothin', it's nothin'; I'll be fine!" Do they minimize their need to be taken care of?

Today we are going to spiritually consider that maybe we have a problem. Sometimes we don't realize we need some spiritual fixing. We need a spiritual doctor. We are going to take a look at Matthew. If you have a Bible you might want to turn to it with me: Matthew 9:9-13. *"As Jesus passed from there he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth. And He said to him, 'Follow me.' And he arose and followed him. As Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold many tax collectors came and were reclining with Jesus and the disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' And when He heard it He said, 'Those who are well have no need for a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what it means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice, for I did not come for the righteous, but for sinners.'"*

Let's take a look at that passage and consider what is going on here. It starts off by saying Jesus passed on from there. Jesus began His ministry in Israel. It began around the Galilean Sea and by chapter 9 He had crossed the sea a couple of times. During those encounters with people that are recorded in our Gospels he met people. Before He met Matthew He called those fishermen to follow Him in a similar kind of encounter. He made a very definitive statement: follow me. They dropped what they were doing and followed Him. I look at that and one thing the passage does not tell me. It doesn't tell me very much about Matthew. Was he married? Was he a good man? Was he an honest tax collector? Did he study the Word every day? Did he pray every day? Is there something about him that made Christ say this definitive statement, "Follow Me; follow Me"? Jesus was around lots and lots of men and there were crowds He had to get away from. But He saw this one man and He said, "Follow Me."

That is quite a wonderful thought isn't it, that our Lord saw this man who was sitting in a tax booth. There was nothing remarkable about him but he said "Follow me". And he arose, doesn't say he thought anything about it, he arose and followed him.

Just to remind you that being a tax collector was not a highly reputable job, at this time the Roman government was in charge of Israel and the many times used Jewish men to collect their taxes. One reference I saw here says that the tax collector in the New Testament was usually a Jewish man who had basically become a traitor to his own people. Sometimes he was a wealthy man who contracted with the Roman government for the responsibility to collect taxes from a specific district, often with the backing of the Roman military. Such a man was often called a chief tax collector for other men worked under him. An example of such a tax collector was Zacchaeus: you can read about him in Luke 19. On some occasions a chief tax collector was a non-Jewish person, but in the case of Zacchaeus, he was a Jewish person. Others, also called tax collectors, were employed by chief tax collectors to do the actual collecting of tax money from their own town's people. A good example of this was probably Matthew. This is not a highly reputable man, for some would call him a traitor to his people.

So what does it say? It goes right into verse 10: "*And as Jesus reclined at the table in the house...*" Some talk about Him reclining and eating a meal. Do you see a problem here? Do you see anything that is about ready to explode in Jesus' face here? That's a nice thing to do, reclining at the table. The next part of verse 10, "*...many tax collectors and sinners and came and were reclining with Jesus and His disciples ...*" Well we have the beginnings of something here that is going to be a conflict for Jesus to deal with. We know who these tax collectors are. We have a bunch of these traitors, these people that were viewed very negatively by the Jewish people, they were there. What is this category called "sinners"? It doesn't define this. A bunch of tax collectors and sinners came in and were eating with them. Some people could say they were irreligious people, irreligious Jews. These were people that were identified as not being really following the Jewish customs or Jewish faith. The word "sinner" sometimes referred to outwardly sinful people. Can you tell what a sinner looks like? Whatever this case is they recognized these people as being sinners, tax collectors and sinners.

What is this problem that all of a sudden appears here? You have these people called the Pharisees. The Pharisees; I think that if I lived back in these times it would be very hard not to see these as the guys wearing the white hat. These are the good guys. These are the guys that everyone respects. These are the guys that have a high reputation in the community. Let me read a summary of the Pharisees: "The Pharisee was a religious and political party. It had its origins in the second century before Christ. This group, the Pharisees, had its roots during the time when it seemed as if the whole world was embracing the Greek culture. The Pharisees arose to combat this influence and to preserve Jewish ways. They so esteemed the letter of the Law of Moses, more than the spirit of the Law, and so esteemed the oral traditions that were said to have sprung from the Law that they devised devoted observance for everyday life." The most famous Pharisee of all in the Bible was Paul. Paul was a Pharisee. Paul describes himself as a Pharisee.

Now even though I think it would be very easy to view these people as the heroes of the time, or those in the white hats, it always has troubled me that they could not get along with Jesus at all. They were constantly in conflict with our Lord. And our Lord said some rather strong things to them. Do you remember those? If you turn over to Matthew 23, my O my, it takes a whole chapter just to lay these people out. My [Bible has the] title called "Woes to Scribes and Pharisees". Let's take just a little bit [of what comes] out of there: v. 15 says of them that they travel land and sea to win one proselyte or convert, and when they won them it says they made him twice as much a son of hell as themselves! Wow! You convert someone and you make them more fit for hell than you yourselves are. That is strong. Then it says over in v. 23, "Woe to you

scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. You take a tithe of mint and anise and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the Law: justice and mercy and faith. You are blind guides.” In v. 28, “Even though you outwardly you appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” You appear on the outside to be righteous, but on the inside you are a big mess!

These are the Pharisees. They were standing on the outside, looking in and watching what Jesus was doing and they had some criticism, didn't they. But it always troubles me: would I have seen what they were at the time? So they were standing outside, and a commentator said you couldn't have greater opposites than the Pharisee and the tax collector. “The Pharisees was a respected and esteemed student and defender of the Law, and was considered to be a careful seeker of righteousness through the Law. A tax collector, however, was consider a reject of the law, the most despise person in the community, a greedy sinner who had become a traitor to his people, who collected money from his fellow Jews to give to the Roman Gentile oppressors.

So now we have a little conflict to deal with here and Jesus is sensing it. He can tell there is a rumble out there. Somebody is rumbling about what he is doing. I think about this eating that he is doing and his reclining with them and spending some time with them. Is that a good way to reach people? I think eating with people is a great way to have a close connection with people. Don't you think when you go and you have a meal with someone, you have a cup of coffee with them, your defenses are somewhat let down, you talk about what is going on, your life, politics, your values. We know that the Lord had a purpose, didn't He? He didn't just have a conversation with these people; He sat down with a purpose. He saw a need in their life. I think we have to be careful that we're not being encouraged here to sit down with people without a purpose, or a holy purpose. Bad company can have a bad effect on people. We tell our children that and it is true. We need to watch who our children spend time with. In Youth Group we are very careful not to have our youth think that they want to do dating evangelism, to get all entwined with somebody and say its ok. The purpose here is that He was showing mercy to these people. He saw their need; they were people who needed spiritual healing. They were broken people. When we get together with people are we aware that our purpose in getting together with them and some of what we can gain from that is to be merciful to them? I ask you, is there anyone you would be embarrassed to eat with? The Pharisees would never eat with these people. They wouldn't touch them. Is there anybody you would be embarrassed to eat with? Is there any place you would be embarrassed to eat?

I remember many years ago and there were some new kids that came to our Youth Group. I remember feeling that we had to be kind to these people and show some hospitality. “Let's go out for some ice cream.” I remember one of my friends: these were people from our high school; they were not cool people, they were not people of high standing and I remember my friend feeling that tension: “I don't know if I want to be seen with these people.” How sad that is, that feeling that “these people are below me.”

What does Jesus say? How does He first address this conflict that He can tell these Pharisees are having? He says, “*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.*” As I was thinking about this passage, I wondered, “What did these people think about when he said “physician.” Did they have physicians two thousand years ago? What was the state of medicine two thousand years ago? What would they have thought?

I did a little bet of research: the great medical doctor Hypocrites – have you heard of that doctor or of the Hippocratic Oath? He was a great doctor. He was Greek and he lived about four hundred years before Christ. He is actually referred to as the Father of Western Medicine. We recognize that his lasting contribution to the field of medicine is that he founded a school of

medicine, and his school revolutionized medicine in Greece, establishing it as a discipline distinct from other fields. Prior to him medicine or health things were associated with spiritual issues and spirits. He was the first person to believe that diseases were caused naturally and not as a result of superstition and gods. Hippocrates was credited by another man's disciples for establishing a lot of the philosophies of medicine and practices of medicine. He actually was the first chest surgeon. Can you imagine having chest surgery four hundred BC? Would they have used a stone knife? But we see that there were physicians then and they were valued at that time. In fact way back then: the Hippocratic Oath is taken by doctors at their graduation. When I graduated as a doctor we didn't use the actual Hippocratic Oath, they had to change it, because it doesn't match our culture. Did you know that the Hippocratic that he actually wrote has a couple of lines in it, in which one says, "I will prescribe regimens for the good of my patients according to my ability and my judgment and never do harm to anyone." That is a very common value in health care: do no harm. We are not going to do something if we think it is going to harm someone. Another line in the Hippocratic Oath says, "I will not give a lethal drug to anyone if I am asked, nor will I advise such a plan." That kind of comes into the issue of euthanasia. And then it says, "And similarly I will not give a woman a pessary to cause an abortion." So way back four hundred BC writing the Hippocratic Oath and giving some standards to doctors said, you're not going to induce a death, you are not going to induce an abortion, so of course the oath doctors take now is not the true Hippocratic Oath. What they take may be called the Hippocratic Oath, but it is not the true one.

So what is this relationship that Jesus is trying to point out to us and have us think about here that those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick? It seems somewhat self-evident, doesn't it? If you feel ill, it seems you should go and see a doctor. But we learned before that thousands of men are going to die of stubbornness. You may start feeling a little bit sick, or may recognize a little sickness there, but you can maybe not seek a physician. So the first thing is that you have got to recognize your illness. But there's a lot of people that... The word is denial isn't it. They are in denial about what is going on in their life; they are in denial about a symptom, they are in denial about a problem they have; that is what holds them back. The first step is to not deny that you have a problem. That is particularly true in drug addiction. You cannot be in denial. You have to admit you have a problem and need help.

When we come to the Lord it is a similar thing. We have to know we need a Savior, and we have to know we are sinners and we have to know that and feel that in our lives. I do not think that can just be theoretical. I know that the Bible teaches that I am a sinner. I don't feel it, but I know that the Bible teaches that. But it seems to me we need to know that we are sinners, we need to recognize that we miss the mark. Scriptures lay out a standard for us. When I think about our youth, and I have worked with youth for many years, I do worry about our youth in this regard, that you in this church, you folks are excellent parents. It is a privilege to take care of your children. It is a privilege to know your children: they are gentlemen, they are ladies, they are courteous. I would say that your children when compared to the youth of Oroville are incredible shining lights. I am thankful for that. It keeps them out of a lot of trouble. It makes for a lot of happiness factors in their lives. But here is the one concern I have at times: when compared to your peers, when you stand out, when you are told what a great kid you are or wonderful kid you are, will you forget that you have a need for a Savior, will you forget that because you have been raised properly, you have been raised right, you have been raised with good habits, will you still realize that you have covetousness inside, there is deadness inside of me, there is brokenness inside of me. So even though I have good behavior, do I recognize that I have need for a Savior and feel the need for a Savior and how important that is?

Then what does Jesus say? "Go and learn what it means... (he is quoting Hosea, one of the Minor Prophets. In fact Jesus says this twice to the Pharisees. He also quotes the same exact

passage in Matthew 12, and He points the Pharisees who are having this attitude about how important religion is and how important being in religious studies is, "*For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burned offerings.*" That is Hosea 6:6. I desire mercy. Mercy is the outward manifestation of pity; it assumes there is a need on the part of those who receive mercy. There is a need that that person has. It assumes there are adequate resources on the part of the person who shows mercy. So if you show mercy to people you recognize they have a need and you take pity on them. So Jesus points them back [to Hosea] and says, "*I desire mercy and not sacrifice, I desire the knowledge of God more than burned offerings.*"

So what about you, who do you identify with? Do you recognize your need? Do you recognize how far you miss the mark? Do you recognize that you can rationalize your behavior? Do you recognize you have hurt people? Do you recognize there is brokenness there? Do recognize it is hard to say "I'm sorry" because you always feel your right? Do you rationalize your behavior? One Sunday long ago when I was teaching in Richvale I tried to get that across about how we miss the mark, and I put up on the screen really complicated [set of] problems and said, "You don't get to go home today until you tell me the answer to these problems." And it was something crazy like this, like 'Find the integrals of each of these problems', some incredibly complicated thing. And I said, 'You're not going anywhere until you solve these things.' I wanted them to get the idea that they needed to realize and say, "I can't do it; I need help." But wouldn't you know it; there was a smart aleck in the class who was pretty smart and he solved the problem I put up there, so he missed the point that day. So I had to work hard to put a harder problem up there! But the point is to feel that tension: I have a problem, I need help.

I think about the drug addicts. One of the things we treat in the department where I work is narcotic addicts. I notice when I talk to them about their recovery when they go to narcotics anonymous or to alcoholics anonymous they have a custom there that when they introduce themselves every time they restate their condition: "Hi, I'm Mark, and I am an addict." It is a reminder that they are not in denial. They have a problem. They need help and are there for help and recognize who they are. So how about this standard? Does this make you nervous at all: Matthew 22:36-40, "*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.'*" That is a pretty high standard isn't it? When you put your life up to that standard, where do you fall, where do you stand? I sometimes get nervous about parents. I think of Evangelical parents. It seems as though we don't recognize that our children are sinners. Our first response is almost always, "they're right, the others are wrong." When they are having troubles in their twos, you don't tell them their having a problem with sin; we say, "O it's just the terrible twos." Well yes, it is a developmental level, but they are having problems with being kind to other people, they are having a hard time obeying. Don't excuse the time as "just the terrible twos." Or when my children fight with each other, "it's just sibling rivalry." Is that an excuse for not being loving to their sister or their brother, that they have a hard time being kind to their brother. Or what about when they are teenagers: "it's just teenage rebellion." Well, yes, it's rebellion. That is sin. That is a problem. But you know the great thing about our Lord and about being a good parent is, "My child is a sinner, but I love them." "My child is a sinner, and I would give my life for them." My child is a sinner: I pour my life into them. I love them.

These are the words of Jesus. They give us a great picture of God's mercy, of His love. This may give a few take home thoughts. I hope the Lord took this way beyond anything I tried to do. I hope He opened up understanding and ideas. Here might be some things. Follow Jesus. God chooses and calls: will you respond? When Jesus calls to you, "Follow me", will you follow. Jesus loves people, He loves the lost. You can see it: He loves people and you can see it in the

way He lived His life. Will we love people? Being religious only can be an eternal risk. We should be willing to eat with sinners with a holy purpose. Recognize your need for a savior. We are sinners. I am a sinner, I miss the mark. I recognize I need help. Ask for help, don't be stubborn. Jesus died for sinners like me. And yes, if you are sick, you need a doctor.