

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

Open our Attitudes

Well we're here, the last Wednesday, Wednesday #6 in our Lenten series. Again, a reminder that Lent is a 40-day time period where we prepare for the events of Holy Week and Easter. Our theme has been "Open" this year. Open our eyes: open our eyes to see God in the physical beauty and wonder of His creation. And at the same time open our eyes to see spiritually the complete atonement through Jesus Christ and to see Him truly as our Lord and Savior. But we also pray that God would give us eyes to see spiritually like Jesus would see; so that we see others as Jesus sees them.

In our second week, it was open our hands. This begins by first asking God to open His hands and to take us into His hands and once we are in His hands and He is holding us and He is empowering us, we can then be His hands in this world; using our hands to do His work for His sake and for the sake of those who don't know Him.

In our third week, open our ears. Open our ears to hear the great truths of the Bible. It begins with the Sheema. "Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is one; and we are to love him with all our heart all our soul all our strength."

The fourth week our prayer was open our hearts. Open our hearts to the Holy Spirit who works faith in our hearts. Open our hearts to Christ who dwells in our hearts. Open our hearts to receive and be the temple of God's word. And open our hearts to true Christ like love, so that we may love others as Christ loved us.

Last week it was open our lives. Open our lives to the abundant life that is spoken of in scripture. It is an abundant life that has meaning to bring glory to God and to bring salvation to others. We can pray for opening our eyes or hands our ears or hearts; our very lives to God but unless we have the right attitude none of it will make any sense.

And so tonight in our final sermon in this Lenten series it's: Open our attitude. And it comes from Philippians 2 verses 5 through 11, where Paul writes to the people of Philippi and he says; 'have this attitude or mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though He was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.' An attitude, a mind, it literally means to be minded in a certain way.

And when it comes to our mind or our attitude, we have two options. The first is what Paul talks about to have the mind, the attitude of Christ; which is an attitude or a mind of service. He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Jesus could have said 'I'm the Son of God. I'm not doing this. You're the creation I'm the creator.' Then Paul makes that point, "He made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, and being born in the likeness of men." He took on a human body with limitations, with pain, with grief, with death; to serve us, to save us. And so, like Christ, we are to have the attitude of making our self nothing, becoming a servant of all, as Christ became a servant of all. That's the first mind or attitude option.

The second comes in Philippians 3:15 which are the attitudes set on earthly things. We are more interested in our car, we are more interested in our relationships with one another, we are more interested in our house or with money or our job. All of that is self-serving. Christ is serving others. So, Christ the servant is our role model and we could go through now any one of the gospels and look at how He was a servant. Or we can just basically go to one event where I think we see that servanthood coming through so loud and so clear.

It's our gospel for this evening John chapter 17. It's called Christ's high priestly prayer. The setting is He's in the upper room with His disciples. Passover, the Lord's supper, has been celebrated. Judas has been identified as to betrayer and he's already left the room. Peter has said 'though all others may desert you; Lord I will not.' And then Jesus informed him that he would deny Jesus three times. And then Jesus began to teach His disciples in chapter 14, He teaches them, 'I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me. He follows it up with chapter 15 of 'I am the true Vine you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.' And then in chapter 16, He gives the promise of the Holy Spirit, 'who will teach us all things and bring to our remembrance all that we've been taught.' Chapter 17 begins this way: "when Jesus had spoken these words; 'I am the way the truth and the life I am the true Vine the Holy Spirit's coming.' When He had spoken these words, He lifted his eyes to heaven and said, "Father the hour has come."

And then He begins to pray and it's a three-part prayer. The first part of the prayer is where Jesus prays for Himself and so He prays: "Glorify your son that the son may glorify You." Then He says, "You have given Him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all. And this is eternal life that they know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." He then goes on "I have accomplished the work that You gave me to do." And He ends it with "glorify me in Your presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed."

Think of what His prayer is. It's all about God still and its all about us. Bring glory to You God. 'You've given me authority over all flesh so that I can give eternal life to all.' This isn't about Him. It's about us. And what is eternal life? That we know God and that we know Jesus whom He sent. Because when we do that, we know He has accomplished the work that God gave Him to do. Therefore, God is glorified because only He can save, and Jesus will be glorified when we see Him and the Father together in heaven and we are there together. So, the prayer for Himself is basically; 'Help me to be that servant they may follow through. **Bring glory to You** God and bring salvation to those who You love.' It's not about Him even though He's praying for Himself. He's praying for Him to be the servant

Then He prays for His disciples. That's part two. He begins by saying 'I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world.' Now keep that in mind OK, because He is not praying for everybody. He's just praying for His disciples right now. What does He pray? 'Keep them in Your name.' What does He mean by that? Keep their faith strong, keep them abiding in Your Word. Keep them knowing that you and you alone are God. Then He prays that they may be one. Why unity? Unity binds us together and unity in faith, makes a very strong group. And as they are unified together in their faith, that they may have joy. That's what comes with unity and faith, joy. Joy in seeing each other's faith and joy and seeing that faith spread to others so that others are saved.

Now there's someone who's not going to like that and so Jesus prays, 'keep them from the evil one.' He's praying for protection because He knew those disciples were going to be entering into a world of spiritual warfare. Being engaged in spiritual warfare is absolutely no fun. His prayer for his disciples' ends with 'sanctify them in the truth.' The word sanctify, means set them apart, set them apart in the truth. What is truth? Jesus continues, "Your word is truth."

I really want you to think about that. So many people have turned away from actually opening the Bible. They'll watch a video, they read another book, They'll get into a group of talking about God, but unless we are actually in God's Word, sanctified set apart in God's Word which is the truth, we will not be ready to be engaged in that spiritual warfare. We will not have unity because our beliefs will be spread all over. Oh, this person says, or this person says... We must be unified in faith and in God's word. That was His prayer for the disciples.

The third part of the prayer is for us. He prays for us. He begins by saying "I do not ask for these only (speaking about His disciples) but also for those who will believe in Me through their word. And note again, He is not praying for everyone it is for those who believe. There is a distinction between those who believe and those

who do not. What does He pray for you and me? First of all, just like the disciples, that they may be one, that we would be unified. Number two that they may be with Me where I am; that we go to heaven. And number three; that the love which You have loved me with, may be in them. That we would love as Christ has loved us. And last; “And I in them.” That He would dwell on the throne to our heart.

This is the attitude that Christ displayed for us and prayed for us. It's an attitude that understands that we are to bring glory to God through our eyes, our ears, our hands, our hearts, our lives and our attitude. It is a prayer that we would be in unison, sanctified in the truth. Set apart in the truth of God's Word. That His joy is our joy and we take joy in seeing the salvation of others. That His love, a sacrificial love, becomes our love. A sacrificial love for friends, for neighbors, for family and for those who are lost.

But finally, the last part of that attitude, is to look forward to going home. Just as Jesus prayed, “Glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with You before the world existed.” He was saying, ‘let me come home, let me be who I was; Almighty Son of God in your presence’. We look forward to going home and say, ‘glorify us Lord in your presence, return us to what You created us to be. Those who live without sin without death, to the glory of Your Name and in Your presence forever. Amen. The amen doesn't mean the end of the sermon. It means yes, let it be so that we bring glory to God through our eyes, ears, hands, heart and lives, that we truly are sanctified in the truth of God's Word. That His joy is our joy, that His love is our love, and that we look forward to going home.

In our Savior's Name, Amen