

December 6th Sunday 2015

Text: Luke 2:36-37

Topic: Faithfulness in Prayer

Your faithfulness allows God to reveal greater insight to you than to the less faithful. Faithfulness brings opportunities to you that are not given to the unfaithful. God takes pleasure in answering prayers that come from a faithful heart.

Anna had been a widow for many years. In her day, a widow had little status in society and was virtually helpless on her own. Anna spent her time, day and night, in prayer and fasting in the temple. As she prayed, she yearned to see the Messiah. God chose few people to encounter the Savior when He was born, revealing His Son only to those whose hearts were faithful and pure. Anna was one of those few. Jesus would later say to His followers, "Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear. . . it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given" (Matt. 13:16, 11).

Anna continued faithfully in prayer until her prayer was answered. The answer to her prayers did not come immediately. In fact, it came near the end of her life. But God honored her faithfulness. God's redemptive plan to send the Messiah included answering the prayers of a humble widow.

Lesson: Faithful praying may mean a lifetime of waiting to receive an answer. God is looking for intercessors that are willing to continue to pray and to believe until they see God's answer.

Prayer: Dear Lord, ordain me to be a faithful day by day intercessor. Amen.

December 7th Monday 2015

Text: Luke 3:4, 6

Topic: Preparing for the Presence of God

If we are to receive the powerful presence of God, we must prepare ourselves. John the Baptist was God's messenger to help people prepare to receive the Savior of the world. John preached unwaveringly: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt.3:2). Those who heard John's message and prepared their lives recognized Jesus when He came, and they left all to follow Him. This was especially true of the disciples, whose hearts God Himself prepared (Matt. 16:17). Preparation must precede God's presence!

God's instruction for preparation is specific: repentance! This involves a complete change of mind, heart, will, and behavior toward Him. He is *Lord*, and your life must be prepared to receive Him as your Lord. Anything less is inadequate. Some were obviously unprepared to follow Jesus and missed the opportunity (Luke 9:57-62). The religious leaders of Jesus' day were largely unprepared for His arrival. They knew the Messiah was coming. They even knew where He would be born (Matt. 2:4-6). Yet when word came that the Savior had been born, they made no effort to join Him, preferring instead their religious ritual.

If you are unprepared, you, too, will miss the opportunity to experience Jesus. You may practice religion, but you will miss God. While others encounter the Lord personally in worship, your heart will remain unmoved. As others receive a fresh word from God, you will experience a painful silence.

Lesson: Religious activity can never substitute for a heart that is pure before Him. Purity comes only through repentance.

Prayer: Dear God, as the Psalmist did, May you examine my heart and reveal my need to repent of my sin (Ps. 139:23-24).

December 8th Tuesday 2015

Text: Luke 2:52

Topic: The Wisdom of Spiritual Checking

We are accustomed to having our progress measured in many ways. We are given tests in school, evaluations at work, and physical examinations by our doctors. Yet we may never measure our spiritual or social growth. As Jesus grew from an infant to a child, and to a youth to an adult. He “increased in stature” with God and men. The better people knew Jesus, the more they trusted Him. They admired His wisdom and appreciated His compassion. Likewise, as Jesus grew in His relationship with His heavenly Father, He continued to please Him.

The apostle Paul said that when he was a new Christian, he behaved as a spiritual child, but as he matured in his faith, he began to act like a spiritual adult (1Cor. 13:11). There is nothing wrong with acting like a baby when you are an infant, but it is the obligation of every believer to strive for maturity (Heb. 6:1).

When you are a new believer, you will not always know how to relate to others in a spiritually mature way. You may battle with envy, anger, or unforgiving. But the longer you walk with Christ, the more you should relate to others as He does. As you are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, your heavenly Father will become increasingly satisfied with your obedience to Him, as the Father was with His Son. It is helpful for you to measure the progress in your spiritual life from time to time. A good way to evaluate your spiritual growth is to ask mature Christians around you if your actions reveal spiritual maturity.

Lesson: It is imperative that you ask God to evaluate your spiritual maturity and that you never become satisfied with less than a fully developed relationship with God.

Prayer: My God, help me to humble myself to ask matured Christians around me if my actions reveal spiritual maturity.

December 9th Wednesday 2015

Text: Luke 4:14-30

Topic: Truth that sets you free

The news of Jesus’ ministry had spread like wildfire, and everyone wanted to hear him. People hung on his every word, even when he read from the Old Testament Scrolls. Isaiah’s vision was of the Lord sending someone who would make things right in a crooked world. Help was on the way with Jesus - until he started telling the truth about the people who wanted a celebrity instead of a Savior.

What happened? The people were not interested in the truth of Jesus. They wanted new insights, but not new hearts. Jesus reminded the people that they ultimately needed a Savior, not a therapist. “Truly I tell you...” was a warning that the truth that could set them free might, if not received in faith, only make them angry.

Jesus opened the door of salvation beyond the cultural boundaries of Israel by mentioning Naaman, the Syrian leper who was healed by Elisha (2Kings 5). According to their reading of Old Testament, Naaman was considered outside the realm of God's grace.

Lesson: undeterred by their violence and anger, Jesus walked away untouched. How did he do it? Luke doesn't tell us. We only know that Jesus finds ways to keep telling us the truth of God's mercy and grace even when we do not like the answer. Thank the Lord.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, forgive me for wanting a celebrity Savior, and keep telling me the truth that sets me free from sin, shame, and death. In your name I pray. Amen.

December 10th Thursday 2015

Text: Luke 2:28-34

Topic: Falling and Rising

Here the gospel, however, calls us to much more. Jesus did not come into this world to modify a few of our favorite habits. Simeon foresaw Jesus as the cause of people falling and rising. He foresaw people being tripped up by Jesus. And he saw a sword piecing the soul of Mary, Jesus' mother.

What Simeon saw, in part, was the effect Jesus would have on people – even today. Falling comes before rising. We need to be humbled – to confess our sins and our need of God's forgiveness – before our Lord can raise us up to be the kind of people he intends us to be.

Lesson: All this is radical stuff. Falling and rising, dying and being born again. Sin is tough stuff to conquer. Ask Jesus. It is no easy thing to take up your cross. But Jesus led the way.

Prayer: Father, we fall before you to confess our sins. Forgive us and raise us up, we pray to live life in your image to the praise and glory of your name. Amen.

December 11th Friday 2015

Text: Luke 2:39-51

Topic: Morning shows the day

Training a child in the way of the Lord will not make him depart from it at growth (Prov.22:6). Jesus' conducts when left to himself in Jerusalem at the age of 12, for four days speaks volumes of good upbringing. For three days they sought him sorrowing, not knowing what had befallen him. Imagine the anxiety of his parents especially the mother for losing such a child? Where did they find him? Not idling his time away or playing mischief as many of our children nowadays. His parents found him in the Temple sitting in the midst of the Jewish teachers listening and asking them great and difficult questions (v.47).

That is what is expected of members of Christ's families. They should be steady and trustworthy in the presence of their parents or in their absence and use every available opportunity for getting spiritual knowledge before the cares of this world catch up with them.

Lesson: Let Christian children learn from the boy Jesus as an example, pace-setter, and model for their living either at home or at school. The word of the preacher will come true in (Eccl. 12:1).

Prayer: God, help me to follow the example of Jesus. Amen.

December 12th Saturday 2015

Text: Luke 4:38-41

Topic: Jesus the greatest healer

In the cosmos today, there are so many life-threatening diseases we hear of. Diseases like Cancer, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), stroke, fever, bird flu and all the rest. These are diseases that weaken man's strength and often times lead to great mortality. About all these diseases and ailments, physicians have tried all their best possibilities, while others have been tagged- 'No cure' likes AIDS but to and with God all things are possible.

There is a healer who can cure all diseases and he is, JESUS. In today's text, Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law of high fever. He also healed many other people of diverse disease and afflictions. Those who suffered demonic possession were also delivered. This is the greatest height of healing.

Lesson: Are you in any way or by any means afflicted, turn to Jesus today and you will never remain the same. Ours cannot be different from those sick people that were all made whole, as we have read from the passage.

Prayer: Thou great Healer, heal our land of iniquities and injustice. Amen.