

Following Jesus in our Lives – Ephesians 1:1-2, 3/8/2020

SermonTalk is an optional resource for those who desire to underscore and apply key concepts from the sermon the previous week. The format and questions are just a menu from which you can choose or use as a foundation for further questions. The material written in bold are Pastor Jeremiah's key points for our focus.

Note: RightNowMedia offers The Bible Project's introduction to the Book of Ephesians. It is 9 minutes in length and worthy of watching as an individual or group.

- If you were to text your best friends, asking them for three words that describe you, what words do you think they would use? What words would you want them to use?
- Now consider a friend that you think highly of. What words would you use to describe them?

Words are used to give us a picture of someone's personality. There are times when those words may not clearly communicate all that we want to share. Yet there are some words that stand out to the listener and create an abundant picture of what that individual is like.

As our church transitions to reading through Ephesians, Paul provides a wonderful word picture to describe those who will be reading/hearing this letter. This provides a challenge for us as well, to evaluate our day to day to ensure that what others see is that Jesus has transformed our lives, providing hope, meaning and purpose that cannot be measured.

Let's look at Ephesians 1:1-2

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the LORD Jesus Christ.

- Who is writing this letter and what is his story in Christ?
- Who is the letter written to? How are they described by Paul?

Paul by the will of God

Paul is the author of this letter. He spent time in Ephesus sharing Christ by the will of God. Pastor Jeremiah reminded us of the transforming story of Saul to Paul This man who once persecuted Christians is now living a changed life with the purpose of sharing Christ with the gentiles. (Acts 9:15-16) Paul was sent to the gentiles. The importance of this centers in the truth that each of us are sent to people as well. Every directive God gives us is relational that we would follow the edict in Matthew 28 to "go and make" rather than to passively share Christ which is "come and see".

- Matthew 28 specifically tells believers to "go and make disciples." What disconnect do you see between this directive and the belief that the will of God is limited to our job/vocation?
- With this interpretation of God's will, how could you encourage someone who is in a difficult work situation yet needs to keep their current position?

Holy & Faithful

Paul starts this letter by sharing a vibrant picture of people who are walking in faith. They are identified as "holy" and "faithful". Both of those descriptors are ones that stand out for us as the power of God and His word shapes our identify. The introduction serves almost as a reminder to the reader to be aware of the power of God and the change that He makes in someone's life.

- Do you know or have you known someone who you would identify as holy?
- What did that look like in their lives?

Pastor Jerimiah reminded us that God's descriptor in the Old Testament as "holy" has been placed upon Christ followers in the New Testament. The holiness of God should leave a mark on each follower. We live differently. We no longer blend in because we are set apart, we are "holy". This type of life can only come from the work of an "uncommon power from an uncommon God to live an uncommon life." Because of the work of the Holy Spirit, we interact with the world differently. It is almost as if when we are most fully walking with God, that our eyesight is restored, and we see as He sees. The glasses that distort our world is taken off, resulting in every aspect of our lives and interactions being changed.

- In considering your interactions with others, when are sometimes when it has been obvious to you that as a Christ follower you view the world and the people in it differently?
- What are some of the marks of Christ in the lives of the believer that result in Christ followers living differently? (peace, hope, focus on eternity, etc.)

Pastor Jerimiah reminded us that holiness is more than just doing good or being good. Holiness is more than morality. True holiness is centered in a desire and purpose focused on Christ. Holiness comes when we fix our lives on God's purpose and plan.

Paul also described the believers as faithful. Hebrews 11:1 describes faith as "*the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*" This faithfulness is certainty in our heart and life that Jesus will accomplish His perfect work in our lives and in this world. When our lives are steeped in faith, we live with a calm and peace that comes from Him alone.

- Describe a time when your environment seemed to be crazy, yet because of your faith in Christ, you were able to remain peaceful amid chaos.
- God's power changes everything. How do you see evidence of God's power in your world/life or those you know?

Grace and Peace

Verse two is a blessing from Paul of "grace to you and peace from God our Father." These words of grace are a reminder that His grace is sufficient, forged in our own weakness and mistakes. God willingly uses us as we are because of His grace.

Moreover, the peace from God is a reminder that the storms of life cannot breakthrough the peace He puts around us. When our hope is in Christ, our foundation is strong and steady, allowing us to live in differently from those around us.

Application:

In these early verses of Ephesians, Paul is reminding God's people that His power impacts our life and shapes our identity. Our world is full of reminders that hardship, trial and difficulty will come. These should not surprise us. Though we face them, they bring us closer to His promises when we trust Him. We receive grace and peace from Christ. Yet those only come when we are living in obedience to Him loving our neighbor and living the great commission. Then we live lives that are holy and faithful because of His salvation.

- Our world is desperate for peace. Who is God calling you to invest in that you can share His saving work with them?
- Where are you struggling to live different?
- How can we pray for you and encourage you in this endeavor?

Our world is desperate for peace, and we know who can provide this peace. As we strive together to live transformed by Christ, we can live confidently in His power and strength.