

November 16, 2008

### “The Hour Glass”

Two weeks ago we began a new sermon series that deals with stewardship. It really revolves around the phrase, “His love, our response.” In the first week we saw that we are to pursue righteousness both as an individual but also as a church and as a nation. Last week we saw that we need to get our priorities straight. Just as the people in the Old Testament were to build the Temple of God, we are now to build the Temple of the New Testament, which is the Church, the Body of Christ. Now when we do so we glorify God by doing this, which leads us to a stumbling block, time. We just don’t have enough of it. But really its not an issue of time, really it becomes an issue of the heart, what kind of heart is needed? Well I think I’ve found an answer to that, we need a heart like King David.

Consider what King David says, Psalm 27, verse 4, “One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple.” Or Psalm 25, verse 5, “Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior and my hope is in you all day long.” Or Psalm 20, verse 7, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the Name of the Lord our God.” I also like Psalm 20, verse 5, “We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners in the Name of our God, may the Lord grant all your requests.” Or Psalm 18, verse 2, “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer. My God is my rock in whom I take refuge, He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” Or Psalm 16, 1 & 2, “Keep me safe oh God, for in you I take refuge, I said to the Lord, you are my Lord, apart from you I have no good thing.” Or finally, Psalm 16, verse 8, “I have set the Lord always before me because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.” When you hear all of those verses, that King David himself wrote, you can’t help but get the sense that David was in love. He was in love with God. This is why he says in Psalm 119, verses 33 & 34, “Teach me oh Lord to follow your decrees, then I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.” King David wanted to observe God’s commands and what God had set before him with all his heart. David’s heart was right and his desire was simple, he says, “Oh that my ways may be steadfast in

keeping your statutes.” And the result, “I will praise you with an upright heart.” When we consider these things, notice how David talks in absolutes. He doesn’t love the Lord with his heart; it is with his whole heart. He wants to be steadfast in **all** of his ways; he has set the Lord **always** before him.

This is a heart I’ve personally seen before, there is a time when I believe that you can clearly see where a person’s heart is, and that time is called death. It’s kind of ironic, when I get the call to go to the hospital because someone is dying, I feel the most pressure and stress as a pastor, you see, if I’m truly their shepherd, I will love them and want the best for them, which of course is heaven. When I arrive, I immediately talk with the person. The conversation goes something like this; and for the sake of this sermon lets just imagine, I’ve been called to visit Joe. Joe Blow from Idaho.

When I arrive in Joes room, I’ll take his hand, I’ll let him know the truth, I’ll say something like, “Joe you know why I’m here, the doctors called and said your slipping, your loosing the battle, you don’t have much time left,” and then I will transition from earthly to heavenly things, “Joe, are you ready to die and stand before the Lord God Almighty?” You know what? I always get a yes. Or if they are so weak that they can’t say yes, I’ll ask them to squeeze my hand once if it is yes or twice if it’s no, I always get a single squeeze. In fact many times, I’m told, “Pastor I’m ready to go.” But while that sounds so good and comforting and brings a smile to all the families faces, I have to always follow it up, I’ll ask another question, something like, “Joe, if God were to ask you, ‘why should I let you into my heaven,’ what would you say?” Now listen carefully, because this is the answer I usually get. “I’ve lived a good life, I have no regrets, I’m ready.” This causes me concern, because Joe is putting all his hope in himself and in his good life. Compare that to another answer that I heard to that same question, “Why should I let you in to my heaven?” The answer I once got, “You shouldn’t, I don’t deserve it, but your Son Jesus Christ paid the price of my sin as the ultimate expression of your love oh God, I put my faith in Him and in You.” Now that answer gives me hope because that person is trusting God and not himself. In fact, while one person, Joe Blow from Idaho, relies on his good works, the other says, “I wish I could have done more for the Lord.” That my friends is the heart of a Christian, a heart that devotes itself to the Lord, and still feels like 24 hours a day is not enough to give back to the Lord.

There is a reason that the Lord picked the disciples that He did, they had the right kind of heart and were willing to give all of their time to God's service. Consider our Gospel again, Matthew chapter 4, verses 18-20. Jesus is walking along the Sea of Galilee, He sees Andrew and Peter and He tells them to follow Him, and they do. But let's consider what really has happened. We know from the other Gospels that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. He had witnessed Christ's baptism and heard John say of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." He had shared the news with his brother Simon, saying, "We have found the Messiah." The next day, Andrew introduced Simon to Jesus and Jesus gave him the name, Cephas, which is Peter in English. Evidently Peter and Andrew went home after this, whether Jesus told them to or not, we do not know. What we do know is that they were back in Galilee tending to their fishing business when Jesus came and said, "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men." I was humbled this past week as I considered that call and Andrew and Peter's response. "At once they left their nets and followed him." I was humbled because I know that I have responded too many times to that same call with, "wait a second, let me just finish what I'm doing." Or "Can't it wait until tomorrow, I'm tired?" or "Sorry, it just doesn't fit my plan or schedule right now." Peter and Andrew left, they left their livelihood, they left their business, and they followed Jesus. They didn't even close up shop, they left the nets right there where anybody could pick them up and run away with them. They left their family and friends. They became no shows at meetings, social gatherings, and family get-togethers, why? Like David, they loved the Lord.

James and John did the same thing. In fact, they may have had it even a little harder. They were in the company boat fishing, with the president, Zebedee, who also was their dad. They left the business, their livelihood and they left their dad to, "immediately" follow Jesus.

For three years, these disciples did not tithe their time. They gave it all to the Lord and to His ministry. When that time of discipleship or internship was done, they gave all their time, to establishing the church, the body of believers, and they continued until they were killed because of their love for the Lord. Humbling isn't it?

Churches often talk about tithing our time, talents and our treasures, we have been wrong! The only thing God asks us to tithe is our treasures. When it comes to our talents, He calls on us to give it **all** to Him.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 31, “Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” And when it comes to our time, our lives, Paul urges us in Romans 12, verse 1, to “offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy, (that means set apart) and pleasing to God.” Think about it. As long as we are alive, we are to set ourselves, our time, apart for God as a living sacrifice. Which takes us back to our opening statement, “His love, our response.” We become a living sacrifice because when we die it is Christ’s sacrifice that has done it all for us. Consider this the next time that you hear the call to use your time for the Lord.

In our Savior’s name, Amen.