

“I Gotta Be Me!”
Pastor John Bronson

Ephesians 4:31-5:2

June 27,2010

Order of Worship for June 27th, 2010

Welcome and Announcements

Ministry Moment: Champion Christian School by John Ballantyne

Call to Worship: Psalm 34:1-22 and Prayer

Songs of Worship:

“Prince of Peace”

“The Solid Rock”

“Power of the Cross”

“My Hope is In the Lord”

Overhead
Song # 526
Overhead
Song # 540

Offering

Special Music

Message: “I Gotta Be Me!” (Ephesians 4:31-5:2)

Closing Song “Seekers of Your Hear” Song # 557

Parting Word of Grace

“The Prayer Closet”

June 20, 2010

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

This week let us be united in praying for:

1. **National and District EFCA:** that President Bill Hamill and Superintendent Gil Stiglitz will be blessed with health, wisdom, safety; that they will remain humble and focused on the Lord’s will in serving the local churches, college and seminary; that they will effectively advance the work of planting new churches here & abroad; that they will be alert to prevent the EFCA from drifting away from biblical faith and priorities
2. **President Obama:** that the Lord will grant him a pure heart, a clear mind, and good health; that the Spirit will press home to him his spiritual condition as well as that of his family; that by grace he will love truth
3. **Oroville Christian School:** that teachers and aides will enjoy good health and refreshing as well as mind renewing time during the summer; that the Lord will bring the right two new teachers for the school; that finances and enrollment will be strong for the coming year
4. **Military Personnel of the Week: MSgt. David Howell** (son-in-law of Eileen Hewitt):
5. **College Student of the Week: Tiffany Wubbolding, Canyonview Christian Equestrian College** (daughter of Danielle Wubbolding):

Message as preached 6/27

The title of today’s message is “I Gotta Be Me!” This is a constant theme in American life. It is, by the way, one that is being used to further an evil agenda of expanding immorality in our nation. [We are] building on Ephesians 4:31-5:2, read that section of scripture together with me, after which I will make some comments on how those verses will have bearing on our lives:

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

When we looked more extensively at verse 29 last week, [asking] how do we give grace to other people – that was the thrust of the message – I pointed out there are three essential things we must have command of if we are going to be people who give grace to others. I mentioned first that we need to know the gospel. We need to understand what God has done for us; we need to understand who Jesus Christ was; we need to understand what the cross was about; we need to understand what it means to be saved and able to speak to someone else about it. That was the first of the three things I said we must be able to have a command of. The second is we need to know how to look and listen with grace. We need to be able to walk up to a person and engage them in a conversation and draw them out and hear what they have to say so that we can then begin to wait upon the Holy Spirit of God to help us know what to say in response. So we need to know the gospel and we need to know how to look and listen and make wise assessments of the situation. Then the third thing I said is that we need to treasure grace. We need to prize grace. We need to recognize that there is nothing else in our lives that comes close to the worth of God’s love for us, His forgiving, renewing and sustaining love. We need to prize it so much that we eagerly give it away.

This then brought us down to the thirtieth verse. There are two essential truths in that verse that we touched on and I want to refresh our minds on at this point. That thirtieth verse you might recall says this, *“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”* Two truths are in that verse. The first of the truths mentioned is that we are sealed by the Spirit of God for the day of redemption. The second is that we are able to grieve that same Spirit. The importance of that first truth is that it tells us something regarding the certainty of our salvation.

What does it mean to be sealed by the Holy Spirit? In the ancient Near East the seal was the sign of ownership. A seal was considered to be inviolable. It symbolized the power and the purpose of the one who made the seal. If God set His seal on us then God is declaring to all who look upon us that we belong to Him; we exist for His purposes. Furthermore, He will guarantee His purpose in our lives by His power. That is what it means to be sealed in the Holy Spirit. Seals, of course, were not in and of themselves powerful. They were generally made of wax, perhaps of clay and

sometimes perhaps of some kind of metal. In this case, however, the seal is God, it is the Holy Spirit. It is the living presence of God Himself which serves as the seal of our redemption. This matter of the seal is the divine reality behind those remarkable words that we read from Paul in Romans 8:31-39, the verses indicated by my father in my first Bible.

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

I hope that each of you has the “Amen” to that in your hearts. What we are told is that we are sealed for the day of redemption. What is the day of redemption? The day of redemption is that day or that moment when that which has been set aside or sealed or ransomed is in fact then rescued by payment, especially set free from enduring any penalty. It is also the day when the promises are fulfilled. The day of redemption is when things come true at that moment in time. Well, what is the day of redemption for us? You see we are already redeemed. How many of us are looking forward to the day of redemption? Are you not saved? Have you not been redeemed? Are you not free from your sin? Hasn’t the guilt been taken away? Isn’t the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross sufficient for your sin? Yes, it is. So for what do we wait? Well, we wait for the fulfillment of all the promises. Jesus said this: I lose no one; every one whom I have drawn to Myself will be with Me and see My glory! They will be with Me forever. And I hope you can say the “Amen” to that in your hearts as well.

The other truth in that verse thirty is that we are able to grieve the Holy Spirit. What I want us to think about is what it means to be told that the Spirit of God grieves. To recognize that the God Who has saved us and the God Who has sealed us can be brought to grief by our sin: that could unsettle us and cause us to fear that were grief severe enough, He might cast us away. But you see, he spoke of the sealing by the Spirit after he mentions the grieving, thereby giving us reassurance. Do not doubt the certainty of our salvation. What does it mean that ours is a grieving God? Well, it means He is a father. What father does not grieve when their child walks into sin? What father does not grieve and carry upon his heart the burden of a child’s rebellion? What father does not grieve even as he delights? Grief indicates the full personal reality of God in His love for us. It means He stands open and vulnerable to who we are and what we do, and gives full weight to our decisions, good or bad, gathers them to Himself, accepts them as the behavior of His children. The Father of Jesus knows my name. The Father of Jesus knows my grandson Charlie by name. As He delights in my obedience He grieves over my disobedience and the troubles that flow from my sin

not only into my life but into the lives of those around me. He grieves because He knows me personally. He cares for me. He cares for those who love me. The same is true for you.

Keeping this in mind brings huge emotional force, does it not, tremendous poignancy to Paul's words in verses 31 and 32 of Ephesians chapter 4. Listen to these words as if you were a father or a mother and you are thinking of your children: *“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another. . .”* How many grew up with siblings? Was there ever a reason for your parents to say, “Now kids, don't bicker, don't fight, don't quarrel, don't argue. Be kind, be gentle, be merciful.” There are two episodes that came to my mind when I was reflecting on this portion of the word. The one has to do with Joseph in Egypt and the other has to do with Jesus in Judea. As regards Joseph, you might recall he was sold into slavery. Do we recall by whom he was sold? Ah yes, the loving family of Jacob: the dear sweet accord that existed amongst the brotherhood. The particular moment that came to my mind is when Joseph has become the chancellor, the vice premier, top-guy under Pharaoh only in Egypt, he is exceedingly powerful and he has been dealing with the “boys”. You might recall that at some point after he has dealt with them without revealing who he is, he finally can endure it no longer. Remember that? And what we are told in the Word is that he cried out with a great cry that was so loud that Pharaoh and his men could hear it. Why did he cry? Because his heart was deeply moved in the prospect of looking at these his brothers who had done him so ill, and were amongst themselves so unhappy and quarrelsome. Do you recall what he tells them when he sends them back to get [their father] Jacob? One little comment: “Now boys, just get along; don't quarrel and fight and squabble and poke each other in the eye; but be tender and loving and forgiving and, for heaven's sake. . .”

Then, of course, there is Jesus who has to deal with the twelve. I thought of the episode that is told us in Matthew 20. This is the last ascent when Jesus is going up to Jerusalem to die, and He has told His men this now for the third time. Then we are told this: *“The mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. And [Jesus] said to her, ‘What do you want?’ She said to him, ‘Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.”* Ah, the wife of Zebedee loves her sons, ambitious for her sons, very bold indeed to come before Jesus and make such a request. Matthew goes on to say that when the rest of the disciples heard her, they were indignant. I can understand that they were indignant. If you know [the gospels, you know] the same discussion about who was going to be the greatest of the followers of Jesus comes up a little later in the Upper Room. What I would like you to ask yourself is, how do you think Jesus heard those men's words? “Here are my guys, arguing amongst themselves, angling for preferment. Here are my guys, I'm just about ready to go to the cross and they are squabbling over position. Here are my guys, I've poured out my life into them now for almost three years, and amongst them is one who is plotting my betrayal. Here are my guys, the ones upon whom I have placed my confidence and trust and to whom I will give the Holy Spirit, and to a man they are ready to bolt.

When confronting these men about their discussion as to who would be greatest Jesus gave them this answer: *“Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be*

first among you must be your slave, even as the son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Ever wonder what light was in Jesus’ eyes as He spoke those words? I can imagine what light might have been in mine! But in the eyes of Jesus I have every expectation that it was love and sorrow. He had already resolved the question: I will die for their sin. And out of that self-sacrificing love would flow His sorrow, that “I must die, because they are sinful, and their sin causes all kinds of trouble for them, those they love and those who love them. I will pay.”

Beloved, we need to know these things. We need to reflect upon them. We need to feed our souls upon them so that we can live the Christian life, the life of faith. I made this observation last week, which stands: “The first purpose of the covenant is to turn us away from ourselves and to God.” We are to turn to God in faith, thanks, hope and love. Faith trusts God’s forgiveness through Christ, liberating us from guilt and sin. Thanks is thanks for that forgiveness which is constantly renewed. Hope builds on that forgiveness for a changed life. Love is love for the One who has forgiven me. Each of these four responses indicates that we are to live a life in close companionship with God. This is so beautifully brought to us in the 123 Psalm. Let me read that to you: you might close your eyes and let this speak to you: *“To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt. Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.”* The eyes of our hearts look to God for strength, for comfort and for wisdom.

But Ephesians chapter five indicates that we are to look for something more. Look at verses one and two of chapter five. We are to be, *“...imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”* This is what is expected of us. This is the challenge to which we are called if we would live worthy of the calling with which we have been called. Often, I would even say characteristically, we radically short-change the gospel. Almost without exception if I ask someone whether or not they are saved and what it means that they are, they will give this affirmation: I am forgiven of my sins and I get to go to heaven. Hallelujah! I hope that is a hallelujah in all of our hearts! What a joyful prospect that is. What a relief it is. What a good thing to know, that the end point of my personal existence is neither within the dust of this earth nor within its darkened places of sin. Rather, my destiny lies with the eternal God and the glory of His heavens, looking upon my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and rejoicing in the certainty of life everlasting! Thank-you for an “amen”!

But that is not all. You see, the intention of God is not only to offer us a happy escape. He [also] offers us the wonder of an intimate companionship with the Living God. He offers us the opportunity to be a part of taking the word of salvation to every tribe and tongue upon the face of the earth. He offers to us the opportunity to live in such a way that we then give personal testimony as to what it means to have God as one’s intimate companion. He offers to us the opportunity to honor the Living God by upholding His justice and truth in the world. And that is

only a beginning. The heart of our calling is that we would be imitators of God, and that calling says we are to walk in love; we are to be fragrant with holiness; and we are to be sacrificial. The American way of life tempts us to live selfishly, superficial and trivial lives devoted to the pursuit of our personal interests, comforts and amusements. God offers us an opportunity to live for His glory, in which we will discover our own greatness as His creatures.

Pray with me: Heavenly Father Your servant C.S. Lewis said once, Lord, that so many who are Christians prefer to stay in the slum of the city making mud patties when they could have gone to the ocean shore and enjoyed the wonder of the mighty sea. Forgive us that we settle for small things instead of the great things to which you have called us. And having refreshed and renewed our minds, our Father, through Your Word, grant that we might walk faithfully, live more largely and more boldly, and walk more closely with You in this week to come. We ask this, our Father, in Jesus' name. Amen!

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. As best you understand, what is God’s special or specific purpose for your life at this time?

2. Do you struggle with 1) being sure you are saved, or 2) feeling you are useful to God, or 3) feeling like you have sufficient personal strength and wisdom to meet life’s challenges?

3. What is your most frequent “picture” of God? Do you often (ever) consider that God delights in you?

4. Are you more likely to respond to the Bible’s instructions as commands to obey or as appeals for your good?

5. If asked by a relative friend or neighbor, what would you usually say God hopes for in our lives?

6. What is the difference between knowing something and knowing about something?

7. What aside from the cross do know best and love most about Jesus? What are your favorite scenes from the gospels?

8. Do you think demons or fallen angels actively seek to confuse or mislead people, especially regarding spiritual truths? What can we do about this?

9. Are you reconciled to God? What aspects of your life do you find it most difficult to reconcile?