

Order of Worship for April 11, 2010, Communion

Pre-service: OCS Flag Team
Welcome and Announcements

Ministry Moment: None today

Call to Worship: Psalm 145 and Prayer

Songs of Worship:

“We Have Come to Join in Worship”

Song # 207

“All Heaven Declares”

Overhead

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”

Song # 210

Offering:

Invitation to the Supper: “Come, Share the Lord”

Song # 462

The Lord’s Supper:

Preparing the Heart in Song: “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us” Overhead

Preparing the Heart in Prayer:

Prayer and Distribution of the Elements

Message: “Living Like Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21-25)
By Pastor Bronson

Closing Song: “Behold, What Manner of Love”

Song # 708

Parting Word of Grace

Discipleship Hour

Mexico Mission Report: Trip 2010!

Followed by an

All Church Pot Luck

(Vespers is cancelled)

“The Prayer Closet”

April 11, 2010

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying for:

1. **Joel and Virginia Cook, AWANA Missionaries:** that Joel’s contact with each club will encourage the local leadership; that the Lord will protect his home life and his travels; that each club will retain focus and energy to year’s end; that clubbers will come to faith in Christ
2. **President Obama and his Cabinet:** that they will sense the protective presence of God; that they will realize the sacredness of all human life; that they will be humbled by their stewardship of the nation
3. **Small Group Studies:** that strong bonds of spiritually based friendship will grow in each group; that each group will draw in new members; that the areas of study strengthen personal witness; that new groups will form
4. **Military Personnel of the Week: Pvt. Casey Brubaker** (son of John and grandson of Larry and Wanda Brubaker):
5. **College Student of the Week: Josh and Lina Bronson at the University of London** (son and daughter-in-law of John and Nini Bronson): that they will preserve time and energy for one another; that Josh will successfully focus on dissertation research and writing; that both will retain sufficient work to cover their financial needs

The title for today’s message is “Living Like Jesus.” The passage is Ephesians 4:21-25. Please turn there and we will look at it in just a moment. I want to begin by making a bit of review. Let these words come into your mind. Go back to the beginning of Ephesians 4. In chapter 4 of Ephesians verses 1-16 we hear that a Christian is called to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which they have been called. We start at that position: I am called to walk in a particular way. I am called to walk in a way that is worthy of the calling I have received. That calling I have received from God. He characterizes it when we read those verses. He characterizes it by saying that we are to walk in humility, we are to walk in gentleness, we are to walk in patience. Furthermore in this walk we have we are to bear with one another in love. To bear with one another in love, the Christian definition of love is to do that which is best for the other without primary concern for the cost. So consequently it is not the case that it is sufficient for us to kind of put up with one another. We are not supposed to grimly endure until the other guy dies, or moves out of town. We are supposed to consider what is good for the other and insofar as we are able we are to minister to that good. This is part of how we are to work continually to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. So when we gather together, we should to be gathering together as a people who are peaceable in their spirit, who are delighted to see one another, and who have a memory of the ways we have been blessed in the fellowship in order that we would walk together in unity. That is the intention that is being placed in front of us.

This unity and peace that we share with others is an outward manifestation or a way of life reflecting the sevenfold unities of grace we have received from God. What are those sevenfold unities? You know that, we went through these. These are the inner truths of the spiritual reality that defines us as the body of believers. One body, a company of the redeemed; one Spirit, Who is the animating power of the body; one hope which sustains us in our obedience to God; one Lord, Jesus, who died for our sins and rose up again from the dead as the first fruits of the resurrection; one faith which is wholly focused on Christ as our redeemer; one baptism, which is the outward symbol of the inward cleansing of the soul from all guilt and corruption by the Spirit through the Word; and one God who is the Father, over all, and in all and through all. That is who we are; we are the ones who worship that God in that way.

To enable us to live a life continuously in submission to and in harmony with that spiritual reality, God has given us spiritual gifts of various sorts. Paul mentions here in Ephesians 4:7-11, apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers, who were given to equip the members of the body to serve one another. That is why they were given. All of them are engaged in the ministry of the Word and are needed to defend against and defeat the universe of deception and deceivers out of which believers are called in order to live according to that truth. The goal is for each believer to reach unity of faith with and an experientially confirmed knowledge of Jesus as the Son of God: that is the intention. We are to become a people who are matured according to the measure of the fullness of Christ. We are to leave behind childhood and doctrinal uncertainty. This is accomplished by each one speaking the truth in love, and each one taking up their part for the well being of the whole body. That is the intention of our God.

If you cast your mind further back and you look at Ephesians 1-3, Paul there has given to us a brief description of what God has done to call the church into being – the body of Christ – to ensure its continuance as well as stating its purpose. The purpose of the church is to live to the glory of His grace. If we go one to Ephesians 4:1-16, which I have already touched on, this is a basic sketch of what it means to be a part of the church. Then, in 4:17 on to the end of this letter, Paul begins to speak of what it takes to live as a Christian. What does it take to live as a Christian?

In some circles to say something like that would be a shock. “It is by grace, it doesn’t take anything; I just believe!” Well, that is not what the Bible says. The Bible says that it takes a great deal to live as a Christian. Jesus Himself began that conversation with us. In Matthew 16:24-26 Jesus says we are to take up our cross daily. The whole point of the cross is that it is a place where you die to yourself and come alive to God. In Matthew 10:24-25 and

again in verses 34-36 Jesus spells out the cost of discipleship: what does it take to be a disciple of Jesus? What does it take to follow Him? This is what Jesus said: *"A disciple is not above his teachers, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul [devil], how much more will they malign those of his household?"* In other words, if when Jesus was alive and he walked upon the face of the earth He was mocked and scorned, what do we think is going to happen to us? We shall be mocked and scorned. For it is enough for the servant to be like the master, and therefore to endure the same kind of treatment. *"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth, I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household."* What does it take to be a Christian? God's grace does not excuse us from the hard work for living like Jesus, but rather God's grace equips us so we can do it.

What then does Paul indicate is needed to live as a Christian? In a word, there needs to be a foundational revolution in our personal lives. May I say it is because this revolution is so difficult to accomplish and so demanding to live consistently, that most of us endure Christian lives of "yes" and "no", of beginning and halting, of going forward and then staggering backward because we are incapable of becoming fully resolved and wholly resigned and perfect in our obedience: of course! Paul goes on to say in these verses that we are to put off the way of the Gentiles or pagans or non-believers and to put on a way of living which is modeled after Christ Himself. The essential tool for doing this is a renewing of the mind. Come with me to Ephesians 4:21-25, Paul there says, *"...assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."* The unredeemed mind, the mind of the natural person, is corrupted through deceitful desires. If left to themselves, desires insinuate or they promise our souls happinesses and satisfactions upon which they cannot deliver. They entice us constantly. It is of the nature of desire to claim our attention, whether it is pain or pleasure, generally without respect to good or evil, just or unjust, fair or unfair. In other words desires tend to be devoid of any moral content. Consequently all people necessarily suppress and repress and seek to control their desires, but we do not do so in the same way or according to the same ranking or priorities. Much of this is so incidental as to be inconsequential in our lives. Let me contrast a few desires and you see where you come out on this and you can decide whether or not there is a high moral content to this difference: some people like creamy peanut butter, I like crunchy! How many flavors of Kool-Aid are there, all of which I consider to be im potable [undrinkable], but that is alright! How many people would prefer to snow ski to water ski? Well...differing desires, differing pleasures: is there a moral content to these? Not necessarily. Remarkably, and tellingly, however, even these desires tend to promise more than they can deliver. "Can I escape my troubles by pursuing a day on the slopes? Can I escape my sense of unworthiness by having another peanut butter sandwich? Ah! How many desires are indulged in order to satisfy a different need? The way desires deceive us is most often by means of false associations. We have a lovely example of this: how many of you have observed automobile advertising? Do you ever wonder what that girl was doing there? I mean, you have four wheels and a body and an engine and a steering wheel and this dame draped over the front end of the car. That dame's got nothing to do with the operation of that automobile, but she has got everything to do with the operation of your desires. She speaks about a potential kind of liberation and freedom and smartness and motion and stepping into a kind of life that's got nothing to do with the car, except the advertiser is knowledgeable enough to know how to hook you. This in fact is the heart of much if not most advertising. Such associations take place throughout the whole spectrum of desire, calling upon memory, fantasy, hope, fear, pride, ambition and the whole gamut of those more complex and powerful emotions which can so easily dominate our lives. For the unsaved person there is ultimately nothing to defend themselves against the seduction of these desires. The mere fact that they dress themselves in respectability cloaks and adorn their lives with good works alters nothing. Indeed we should be conscious of the fact that self-righteousness and pride are amongst the most complex and powerful desires in the fallen heart. Most self-righteousness and pride will gather many good

works to themselves to augment the image of their own superior worth, though, as we know through the Word of God, the outward appearance bears no necessary relationship to the inward reality of the heart. So goodness as we stand before God is not a matter of external works but of an internal disposition of the soul.

I have gone over all this before. Why do I go over it again? Beloved, constructively and creatively bringing order to our desires lies at the heart of the walk of faith. God created you and me and all human beings with the capacity to desire things. Desire is part of what we are, so that to attempt to live without desire – Buddhism [which seeks serenity in life through the eight-fold path of denial, seeking to suppress all desire]: anybody know somebody named Tiger Woods? It is a disaster! Why is it a disaster? Because it is a lie! – The attempt to live without desire is the attempt to live what is impossible, to live a lie. David concluded this in Psalm 16:1, *“Lord, You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”* Do you desire pleasures? I do. The fault, the problem, the challenge does not lie in [the desire for] pleasure; it lies in where you go to satisfy it. That is the real issue: rightly ordering our desires. Again David says in Psalm 36, speaking of God’s love for us (vv. 7-8), *“How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights.”* Ho! A feast, abundance and a river of delights: the problem does not lie in the wanting of pleasures, it lies in where you go to satisfy them. Again in Psalm 37:3-4 we read, *“Trust in the Lord, and do good, dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”* C.S. Lewis says of us that our problem is not that we desire too much; we desire too little. We are willing to put with the crumbs that fall off of the table rather than going for the full meal. So we become satisfied with small things and leave the great things of God beyond our reach. The problem is not having desires; it is where you go to satisfy them.

John sums up worldly desires in this manner in I John 2:15-16, *“...the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions...”* What are worldly desires? Worldly desires are these: they are desires which promise full satisfaction here and now and for which God is irrelevant. Indeed, worldly desires are the kind of desires which when we satisfy them us pull us away from God, they draw us further and further away from Him because He is both irrelevant and non-present. Beloved, are you listening to the Spirit of God? Are you being drawn to Him or from Him by the things you are currently pursuing in life? I talked about this before, I talk about this frequently; it is a constant struggle. I had a terrible experience when I was in Denver. We lived in a beautiful parsonage. I got to looking at the newspapers – newspapers are an old fashioned form of communication. They are printed on paper, have pretty pictures and words: just so you know – so anyway, I love homes, I love architecture and I began looking at the ads. After I was looking at the ads for quite a while I thought I would stop by and look at a few of the town homes and condominiums, and then I was looking at the homes being built out on the hills. One day I was driving along the freeway and I said, “What am I doing? Where am I going? Why am I going out to look at these homes? I can never afford to buy one of these homes. I am taking time away from what I ought to be doing. This is insane.” And that was right, it was insane, it was self-destructive, self-deceptive, self-indulgent and it was pulling me away from God. If you allow anything to pull you away from God, you are being pulled away from the one thing that is ultimately real. All things have been created by God; all things are sustained in their being by God; therefore to be drawn away from God is to be drawn away from reality. When you are drawn away from reality, guess where you go, into delusion and the lie.

To guard against and overcome the way these things corrupt and deceive us, Paul says the renewed mind of the believer puts on the new self which is like God in *“true righteousness and holiness.”* I want to pause for just a moment. I won’t be able to finish my sermon today in the few minutes left. I read part of an article in [the magazine] “Christianity Today” the other day, yesterday I should say, and in the article the author confessed his personal shock when, not long ago, he realized that his own understanding of salvation had no need for the resurrection of Jesus Christ at all. It was not that he did not believe in the resurrection, he did. He was one who

would share with others the Roman Road to salvation. Many of you probably know this. The Roman Road begins with the fact that we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. It moves on to the fact that the wages of sin is death. Moves on to the fact that Jesus' death is the only satisfaction for a righteous and holy God against our sin: true? Amen! It tells us along the way, that the righteous man is saved by faith and not by works. Jesus' death has paid that price. So we are saved by faith alone through grace alone, by Christ alone. And in the words of Jesus, "It is finished." But the question is, if salvation is finished on the cross, who needs a resurrected Jesus? I contend to you, my beloved, that the majority of people who claim to be Christians cannot effectively answer that question, because in the conduct of daily life they have no need for Jesus at all.

Intuitively we realize that the question is as monstrous as it is somehow silly. It is rather like concluding that since a person is legally married at the end of the wedding ceremony when all the documents are signed there is no need for the couple to actually live together and consummate the marriage. The Roman Catholic Church is not in all things sensible, but in this one it is. Roman Catholic teaching and practice says that a marriage can be annulled for it has not been consummated. Ah! We are talking about consummation. We are talking about the believer coming into union with God through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit by faith in Jesus Christ. We are talking about something become fertile. We are talking about something becoming fruitful. We are talking about a life that is transformed from the dead stick into the living branch. We are talking about the life of God pouring into the heart and beginning to effect that transformation for the whole character so that I walk daily with my God, daily with my resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, daily I call upon him for renewed mercies, renewed instruction, renewed grace, renewed forgiveness, daily I walk with my Lord Jesus, daily! Amen. Because daily I must die, and live daily. Without that consummation there is neither intimacy nor fruitfulness in the marriage. The wedding is not done. The analogy holds for the Christian life. Unlike professional sports teams, those who sign the contract with Jesus for salvation are not thereafter free agents, at liberty to roam about looking for the next better contract. That, in fact, is the point. Free agents, which is to say those who in fact have not committed themselves to Christ as Lord and Savior and so consider themselves free to roam about, will in fact do just that: they will roam and they will betray the marriage they pretended to have made.

Let us pray: Our gracious heavenly Father, You have designated us as the bride of Christ. Grant that we not be sterile, but rather, wholly connected to the vine and bearing abundant fruit through His indwelling; in Jesus' name. Amen

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. Have you found that you think differently than your unsaved family or friends? In what ways is this most obvious?
2. To what worldly desires are you most vulnerable? What false associations have you noticed in advertising?
3. Do you struggle with the idea that “real Christians” want neither pleasures nor delights?
4. In what way(s) is Jesus most important to you today?
5. Around which of God’s promises do you tend to organize your life?
6. What makes yielding to God for a renewed mind most challenging for you?
7. Have you been inclined to give up on issues in your personal life, family life, church or community or political life or just life in general? Do you recognize giving up as a sin?
8. Do you think of holiness as a rule centered life or a God centered life?

What most challenges you in understanding and trusting in the grace of God?