

Cornerstone - Devotional 3

June 17th, 2010

Joseph Whittle

Striving each day for what matters

Discussion: What would you consider important in your life today? What matters the most to you?

This year as following with the CCSA theme, we are exploring what we consider to be “the commitment line”. Through our previous studies, we have talked about our separation from God, how the relationship has been damaged beyond repair with our own hands. The damage, which comes from within us, from our hearts, it is sin which is a violation of moral and spiritual rules. And this sin has become part of our nature and is common to all men (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Now, we also discussed that there is no way for us to cleanse, get rid of this sin in our own power. We are held responsible for it, and we will face God’s wrath. Yet God knew this, and in His mercy & love, He provided Jesus Christ who would not only take the sin upon Himself but also suffer for it for all those that believed in Him. Now we must be thinking “why did God need to send someone to die for us? Why couldn’t He just ignore the evil things that we did?” Well the answer is in God’s character. He is Holy and just. Holiness gives us a picture of purity and a character that is perfect and held to a set of high standards – His standards - God’s very nature is the opposite of sin, and he cannot be tempted by it (1 Peter 1:16).

There is no one that is good or blameless in the eyes of God, for only He is good (Luke 18:19). Therefore, the only way we are to come before God is through the means that God has provided for us. God is just, and where sin is found, He demands the payment of blood/death for it. Christ was the perfect sacrifice, who was free from sin, and he took the penalty of our sins. Your, my sin became His burden and He died for our sakes. Things like the lies we tell to our parents, when we cheat on those tests, and even when we stole from others, Christ died for that and more.

While sin includes the acts, sin itself is much more sinister than this. The whole concept of sin cannot be boiled down to mere “evil acts” even though “evil acts” are included in the definition of sin. The concept of sin is our state of being where we rebel against God, we mistrust Him, we disdain His goodness and His plan for our lives.....and this is *manifested* in the sinful acts that we commit. This is important as it prevents the implication that “if we were just better or less sinful people, we would be good enough for God”. There is something rotten at our core.

That’s the point where we left off at. Today we will look the things that we consider important in our lives. So let’s reflect on some of those things we talked about.

Possessions: Cars, iPods, phones, 55inch TV...

Sure, possessions are important, how would we have driven here without our cars? Picked people up without calling them without our phones? They are what make up our society today, make life easier: our possessions.

Family & Jobs:

June 17th, 2010

Some other answers were probably more along the lines of family, and maybe the jobs we have that support them. I think most of us would agree that these two things are the most important things that we can have in this world, if we want to feel love and security.

God:

Now how many of us said God was the most important thing in our lives today? I'll admit, that wasn't my first conclusion when I asked myself that question. But isn't that something that we should be striving for? Growing in our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ?

Now imagine that you died today and you stood before God, what would you answer Him when He asks you what mattered the most in your life? How would you answer Him? I personally would be ashamed to say that my possessions or my family are more important than Him.

Now there's nothing wrong with having possessions, family and jobs in our lives. They are gifts from God, and it's a blessing to have them. However there's a line we must draw. We must each ask ourselves the question what priority these things have in our lives. Where do we each place God among all the things we have? As Christians, we are called to acknowledge and seek Him in all our ways and place Him first above all things (Proverbs 3:6). So, are we guilty of putting something else before Him? Has something become your idol instead of God? (Exodus 20:3-4). So to give you an example, if I was constantly searching, buying the latest technologies, and always consumed with it day and night, where would God fit into my life? I would be turning my back on Him and all has done for me.

The same idea applies to jobs and even family. We are not to be consumed of the things of the world. Let us consider these things; a new car, food, jobs, even our lives. Where will these things be in 100 years? They will no longer be here. The world and what it has to offer is temporary, it will only last a finite amount of time. *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal."* – Matthew 6:19. Once we are dead, our bodies, treasures, jobs, and even our family are meaningless.

If we claim to love God and know God, yet do not do what He commands, we do not belong to Him (1 John 1:6). If we claim to love God and our possessions/things, we are liars (Matthew 6:24). *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* – Matthew 6:33-34. We need to focus on God period, by placing Him above all else, all our needs will be taken care of.

Let's take a look at what mattered to Christ and those closest to Him.

Christ stated that the greatest commandment was *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."* – Deut. 6:5

How did those closest to Christ demonstrate this love to God? Christ's followers/disciples gave up their jobs as fishermen, tax collectors, left their families and followed Him. They left their possessions and everything behind them. A lot of them even died for Him!

Cornerstone - Devotional 3

June 17th, 2010

Christ and His disciples believed that God would provide the necessities in life for them, so they concentrated on what mattered to God. *“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* – Matthew 6:20-21

By allowing God to be their treasure, everything that mattered was given to them. God is the one who decides what matters most to us. It's not that by doing what God wants; somehow in return He will give us what we really want in our lives as a reward. Rather, by serving, He gives us what HE KNOWS we need. Example: I turn to God because I believe that He will grant me what I perceive as my needs. That is a wrong perception. God gives us what He knows we need.

By serving God, and carrying out His commands, the disciples stored up the treasure's that would never rust, never perish – an eternal treasure. Through faith they received the fruits of their labour, a place in God's eternal kingdom (Ephesians 2:8-9). We have already, by grace, been given a place in the Kingdom through Jesus Christ, our labour does not “earn” us anything, rather our labour is an act of response/thanksgiving to what He has already done for us.

For all those that have truly placed their trust in God the Son, they have committed to Him. I say truly as we covered in our last devotional, there is no compromising in our commitment (1 John 1:5-7). If we claim to walk with God in fellowship, we must give 100% of our soul, mind and life. There is no 25% no 50%. It's either all or nothing.

So let's consider our lives once again, and repent for placing the idols in our lives before God. As we go forward, let us remember the things that really matter in this world and strive to glorify Him with our lives and actions. As Christ said, *“If we seek first God's righteousness, everything else will be given to us.”* Matthew 6:33-34