



GOD'S LOVE CHANGES OUR HEART

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

CATCH-UP

- WHAT WAS YOUR HIGHLIGHT FROM THE PAST WEEK? WHAT WAS YOUR LOW POINT FROM THE LAST WEEK?

READING/DISCUSSION

- READ THE SERMON TEXT FOR THIS WEEK.
- HOW DID THIS SERMON/TEXT DEEPEN YOUR FAITH? HOW DID IT CHALLENGE YOU? EXPLAIN.
- WHAT RESONATED WITH YOU THE MOST FROM THIS SERMON/TEXT? EXPLAIN.

IN THIS SERMON, DAN MENTIONED AN INFLUENTIAL BENEDICTINE MONK BY THE NAME OF BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX. DAN SAID THAT BERNARD “WROTE ABOUT THE LOVE OF GOD AND SAID THAT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ABOUT MATURING IN THE OBJECT AND THE MOTIVATION OF LOVE.” IN HIS WRITING, BERNARD GIVES US FOUR STAGES OF LOVE:

LOVE OF SELF FOR SELF'S SAKE – THIS IS WHERE WE PUT OUR SELVES FIRST AND LOOK AFTER OUR OWN NEEDS BECAUSE WE HAVE A CONSTANT AND UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO OUR OWN GOOD.

LOVE OF GOD FOR SELF'S SAKE – INSTEAD OF LOVING OURSELVES AND PUTTING OUR NEEDS FIRST, WE LOVE GOD AND WE PUT HIS NEEDS FIRST. BUT WHY DO WE DO IT? BECAUSE LOVING GOD IS THE WAY TO THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, LOVING GOD IS THE PATHWAY TO A BETTER LIFE, AND LOVING GOD IS THE PATHWAY TO HEAVEN. WE LOVE GOD, BUT WE DO IT FOR SELF-MOTIVATED REASONS.

LOVE OF GOD FOR GOD'S SAKE – THIS IS WHERE YOU LOVE GOD FOR WHO HE IS, NOT WHAT HE CAN DO. YOU PRAISE HIM AND ADORE HIM NOT BECAUSE HE'S USEFUL, BUT BECAUSE HE'S BEAUTIFUL. AND EVEN IF THERE WAS NEVER ANY PERSONAL BENEFIT TO YOU, YOU WOULD WORSHIP HIM THE SAME. YOU LOVE HIM JUST BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS.

LOVE OF SELF FOR GOD'S SAKE – THIS IS WHERE IT COMES FULL CIRCLE. THIS IS WHERE YOU'VE LEARNED TO SURRENDER ENTIRELY TO THE WILL OF GOD AND YOU'VE LEARNED TO LOVE EVERYTHING THAT GOD LOVES. AND SINCE GOD LOVES YOU, YOU LEARN TO AGREE WITH HIM AND LOVE YOURSELF AS WELL. AND YOU DON'T LOVE YOURSELF FOR ANY OF THE REASONS YOU USED TO. IT'S NOT BECAUSE OF A BIOLOGICAL, PRE-WIRED CONDITION TO ADVANCE YOUR OWN ENDS, IT'S NOT BASED UPON YOUR BEAUTY OR INTELLECT OR SUCCESS, IT'S BASED ON BEING A TREASURED CHILD OF GOD, THE OBJECT OF HIS LOVE.

UPON READING THESE FOUR STAGES, WHICH DO YOU THINK MOST ACCURATELY DESCRIBES WHERE YOU ARE IN RELATION TO GOD? WHY?

- WHAT DO YOU THINK IT LOOKS LIKE TO BE ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN GOD'S LOVE? HAVE YOU EVER FELT THIS WAY? WHAT CONTRIBUTED TO THAT FEELING FOR YOU?
- DESCRIBE A TIME THE TIME IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU FELT MOST ROOTED IN GOD'S LOVE. DESCRIBE THE TIME IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU FELT MOST DISCONNECTED FROM GOD'S LOVE. WHAT DID THESE TIMES FEEL LIKE?
- HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE LOVE OF GOD BY BEING WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD? NAME A TIME WHEN YOU EXPERIENCED THIS.

ENCOURAGEMENT

- WHAT DO YOU SENSE GOD DOING IN YOU THAT YOU NEED TO RESPOND TO?
- WHAT DO YOU SENSE GOD DOING AROUND YOU THAT YOU THINK HE IS INVITING YOU INTO?
- WHAT DO YOU SENSE GOD DOING THROUGH YOU THAT YOU NEED COURAGE FOR?

PRAYER: SPEND TIME AS A GROUP IN PRAYER PRAISING GOD FOR WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE IN AND THROUGH CHRIST JESUS. SPEND TIME AS A GROUP PRAYING FOR THE NEEDS OF THOSE IN YOUR LIFE AND FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW JESUS.

ACCOUNTABILITY: AT THIS TIME, THE GROUP MAY WANT TO SPLIT INTO SMALLER, GENDERED GROUPS.

- WHO ARE YOU IN GOD'S EYES? WHO ARE YOU IN THE EYES OF THIS GROUP?
- WHAT HAS CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED FOR YOU ON THE CROSS?
- WHAT HAS YOUR TIME IN GOD'S WORD AND PRAYER BEEN LIKE THIS WEEK?
- HAVE YOU CONSISTENTLY REFLECTED THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO THOSE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK?
- WHERE HAVE YOU WRESTLED WITH TEMPTATION THIS WEEK?
- WHAT STRONGHOLDS HAVE YOU WRESTLED WITH THIS WEEK?
- WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO AVOID TEMPTATION?
- HAVE YOU BEEN 100% HONEST?

PRAYER: SPEND TIME AS A GROUP IN PRAYER FOR ANYTHING THAT MAY HAVE SURFACED FROM THE DISCUSSION/ACCOUNTABILITY TIME THAT YOU PERSONALLY FEEL LIKE NEEDS TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE LORD.