

Service Transcript

Sunday 1st November 2020

Leader: Janet Rhea

Speaker: Mark Reid

Our outer world consists of the things we see, touch, feel, smell and hear. It is exhausting. In our outer world the body aches and suffers from little sleep and too much coffee. Life spins at a fast pace and we struggle to keep up with relentless demands.

Our inner world is vastly different. It is here in the quiet place of the soul that our spirit connects with the Holy Spirit. In this Holy stillness we can be comforted, renewed and restored. We are familiar with our outer man, but less so with our inner man. Would it surprise you to know that the inner man has the same five senses.

Powerpoint:

When Jesus says: He who has ears let him hear (Matt 11.15) He is not speaking about our physical ears, but ears that understand and accept the truth.

When Jesus said: Open your eyes in John 4.35, he was not speaking to people who had their eyes closed, he was referring to the eyes of the inner man who sees beyond the temporary into the eternal.

When the Psalmist said Taste and see that the Lord is good, he was not referring to a new type of cheesecake, rather the need to partake of spiritual truths about God that nourish our hearts and strengthen our spirits. (Psalm 38.8)

When scripture talks about being a fragrance to the world, it is not saying we need to wear an expensive perfume, rather we should put on "the aroma of Christ" (2 Cor 2.15)

When we talk about "touching lives" we are not talking about physical contact, about poking another person to attend, rather about a transformation taking place within the heart because that aroma of Christ we have developed through time in Jesus presence is grace that affects those around us as we interact.

We all live in these two worlds. While our outer man grows old and weak, our inner man should be renewed day by day ("Cor 4.16)

Just as we would not neglect feeding the outer man, we should not neglect feeding the inner man with the Bread of life that is Christ Jesus.

Our world is spinning crazily, remember you can retreat to a quiet space in your soul where your heart connects to God and your inner being is renewed. What happens in this space impacts the outer world in ways we could never fathom.

We need to believe that and practice the pause. As we come to a time of prayer remember there are 3 stages in the work of God: Impossible, difficult and done.

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Sermon: Unless God builds the house

1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. 7 Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. 8 For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. 9 How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. 12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. (NIV)

TITLE

Last time I preached, I brought to you the message of how Paul dealt with those who were being discouraged by his critics who claimed he was nothing but a self-seeking false teacher. He was worried that the Thessalonians would be swayed by their falsehoods. We saw how he dealt with it by reminding them of their experience of him and his team, how they behaved, and also their experience of the power of God.

In the present difficulties, when that which we have relied on for so long is taken from us, the message of God is that He doesn't change and that we should rely on our own testimony and the testimony of others to remind of us who He is and trust Him in a world that has become unreliable.

1 Thessalonians is a bit of a "wisdom of hindsight" letter as Paul wrote it to them after worrying about what had become of them, and sent his young protégé, Timothy to go there and check up on them. Of course, God is faithful and Timothy comes back with a glowing report. They weren't fooled at all by the false teachers: Paul says this: VERSE Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you (verse 6).

RAINY DAY

The news encouraged Paul in his distress and persecution. We have already thought today of the discouragement that the present times have brought many of us. That said, we go through rainy days as well as sunny ones, and when we do, it's good to remember all God has done for us, and all that He's doing for others.

Allow God to show you how He's pouring out blessings even when we are suffering from a spiritual rainy day – or rainy season – as we are having right now. Paul said this in VERSE 8 For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Paul was undergoing persecution, and the news raised his spirits.

Let's not be selfish about our faith – let's praise God for what He's doing wherever it is happening, because it all points us expectantly to what He is going to do next in our lives. Our faith isn't a faith of jealousy, but of celebrating in the blessing in others, because we have a God who has freely blessed us – past – and will bless us again in the future, as surely as day follows night or sunshine follows rain. Be encouraged by that.

WHAT NEXT?

It can be a discouragement when some service we do for God comes to an end, particularly when we have been doing it for a long time. We ask questions like “why”, “what now”, “how will the church survive”, “what’s going to happen”. We are in that situation as a church right now. We really don’t know when and how it’s all going to end and what will be left. All we know is that, as we entrust it all to the Lord, we allow Him to work out His will through us, and what comes out will be something that glorifies Him. So we shouldn’t worry – but we do don’t we?

KAREN

Here’s a bit of testimony for you, from Karen Baxter, whom we have followed for a few years now as she has served the Lord in Nepal. This little video is a conversation between Karen, and the Pastor of one of her supporting churches, the Independent Wesleyan Church in Rushden (known as The Wes). They are talking about the situation in Nepal and about how her service is coming to a close as she has been unable to get a visa to work there.

For those of you who don’t know Karen, she served with the International Nepal Ministry for many years, before difficulty with the government regarding the nature of Christian missions resulted in her leaving INF and serving with Veritas who deliver training for Pastors, in translating courses and organising that training in Nepal. So let’s have a listen in to her conversation.

VIDEO

WHAT NEXT?

This is a sad time for Karen, but she is encouraged by two things. Firstly, the work in Nepal will continue with Nepali staff. In the work of God, no-one is indispensable. God’s work has only one indispensable person - Himself. VERSE Psalm 127:1 says this Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain. His work in Nepal is His handiwork and we trust as Paul did, that God’s work will thrive in his absence.

Secondly, for those who place their trust in God, particularly in Christian service, it’s always a call away from something into something else. For Karen, she believes God is calling her into a ministry based around a farm she is acquiring in Cumbria. I’ve put a link in the description to the full video so you can find more about that. There is a bit of a step of faith here, as the future ministry is still shaping up as she must close her role in Nepal. Please pray for her that she will build as God wants her to, because unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.

The encouragement I can give Karen – as I know she will be listening to this - is that God moved Paul (unwillingly) from Thessalonica, but because He did, there were the amazing events in Athens, Corinth and Ephesus and all the rest of it. We move forward in faith, trusting in what God is building. The work in Thessalonica continued strongly without Paul because the Lord had built it and Paul went on found churches elsewhere. He trusted and followed. Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.

MRBC

It’s the same for all of us right now. Because of Covid, we don’t have a clue of what this church is going to be like in 6 months or more, only that unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain. Don’t be discouraged by what’s happening now. Allow God to teach you new things, provide you with new opportunities, worship Him in a different way, shake you out of the comfort of church and show you the living faith that you have. Allow Him to build in your life and the lives of others.

Actually that’s what Paul prayed for the Thessalonians – sort of: 12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he

strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones (verses 12-13).

As we come to our programme in the next few months – so different from normal – let's ask God to change us to make our love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, and strengthen our hearts – may we grow in our faith. May He surprise us all!

Let's pray.

Father, we have all found the last 7 months difficult in our different ways. They have introduced new pressures, new issues. The regularity of worship and service in the church has changed radically. Father may we see beyond all the problems into the possibilities that our new world brings, may you turn the discouragement into blessing. Build your church fellowship, this house here at Maidstone Road. Save us from the mistake of labouring in vain without You. Thank you that as we look at the scriptures, we see others have passed our way before; give us the expectancy of blessing as You give to them, we pray.

We pray for Karen as her ministry in Nepal comes to a close, that she will celebrate the years of blessing that she has seen there, and your faithfulness in it, and look forward to seeing your purposes to come together in her new ministry in Cumbria. May she build Your work, Your house. Give her and local churches and Christians in that area a real heart for what you can do there and give Karen the encouragement to trust you and praise you for the blessings that she doesn't yet see. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen

CONFESSION

Father, please forgive us when we find it difficult to trust You. In the difficulties in our lives and in the world, help us to remember that we are never alone from You. We come before you today in our weakness, in our sin, in our feelings of inadequacy and affirm again that Jesus is lord, and through faith we are Your people, Your children because of Jesus: because of His broken body and shed blood.

As we come to the table this morning, may we come, relying on you, on your faithfulness. Strengthen our hearts so that we shall be blameless and holy in Your presence, Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

In His name we ask these things

Amen

The Communion

God is still building His church here at Maidstone Road and we trust in Him so we know we don't labour in vain. Let's rejoice in that as we re-affirm our faith in Him this morning in the Lord's supper.

Loving God,
we praise and thank you
for your love shown to us in Jesus Christ.

We thank you for his life and ministry,
announcing the good news of your kingdom
and demonstrating its power

in the lifting of the downtrodden,
and the healing of the sick,
and the loving of the loveless.

We thank you for his sacrificial death upon the cross
for the redemption of the world,
and for your raising him to life again,
as a foretaste of the glory we shall share.

We give you thanks for this bread and wine,
symbols of our world
and signs of your transforming love.

Send your Holy Spirit, we pray,
that we may be renewed
into the likeness of Jesus Christ
and formed into his Body.
This we pray in his name and for his sake. Amen.

The Bread and Wine

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."
In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."
For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Post-Communion Prayer

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were afar off, you met us in your Son and brought us home.
Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.

May we who share Christ's body live his risen life
We who drink his cup, bring life to others,
We whom the Spirit lights, give light to the world.

Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so that we and all your children might be free, and the whole Earth live to praise your name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer

Let's pray for our fellowship as we near the end of today's service. I would bring to your attention some upcoming items that hopefully will encourage and challenge us.

We received the unexpected news this week that our application to set up a registered charity for the church was successful. The Charity Commission took less than a week to approve it which was astonishingly fast. Praise God for that! Pray for the Leadership Team as they work on getting everything transferred to the new charity as it is something that will take much longer than a week!.

Don't forget our Prayer Meeting next Saturday morning on Zoom. Steve will send the Zoom link out during the week. On the subject of Zoom, our Church meeting on the 10th will also be a Zoom Meeting and we will be having an Election of Deacons. Just to remind you, the closing date for nominations is today – details are in the weekly sheet.

Coming soon are two important Sundays in our calendar, Remembrance Sunday, next week and our Annual Celebration Service the following week. And then as we get to the end of the month there will be a week of prayer called Learning to Pray through a Pandemic organised by Suffolk in Prayer and then the Walton Churches Advent Course – and details for these are also in the Sheet. Lots to pray for! Let's bring these before the Lord.

Father,

We praise You that You love us, we have a Saviour who makes us part of Your family and the Holy Spirit who empowers us. As we look at our programme for the next couple of months, we know that although it is kind of the same, it is also very different. Lord, in it's difference, show us more of Your love, your will and Your power through it, that we may be encouraged and grow through it. We lift each of these activities we have just heard about.

Thank You that the application for charitable status went through successfully. Please give the Leaders wisdom as they deal with the practicalities of transferring assets.

We bring before you our future plans to the end of the year in these exceptional times. We pray that they will be a blessing to the church and to those from the wider community who listen in.

Build Your church we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

May He fill each of us afresh, now, today.

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

That's it for today. May God bless you this coming week. Stay safe and goodbye.

For Reflection and Discussion

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

1. Why is it important to always remember what God has done, and is doing now, particularly when things are difficult for us?
2. Have you had any experiences of God calling you out of a ministry in order to move you on somewhere where He uses you more powerfully?
3. Why is it so important in this time of pandemic to desire to walk even more closely with God? Reflect on Psalm 127:1 in this regard.

Karen Baxter Interview and Update:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ct1lgMEs6mE&feature=youtu.be>