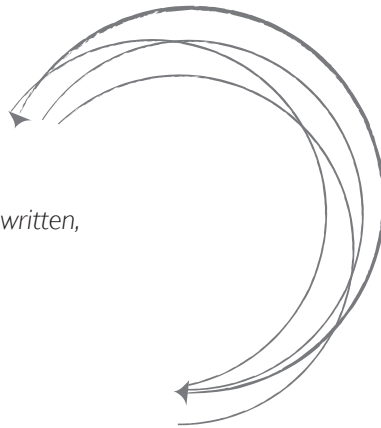




DEVOTIONALS

REVOLUTION

Monday, June 6



Jesus unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me

to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives

and recovery of sight to the blind,

to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue

were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Luke

4:17-21, ESV

There you have it: God’s declaration of revolution. In these verses, read aloud in an ancient worship service nearly 2000 years ago and penned hundreds of years prior to that, we see God’s desire and design, even his dream for the world.

Is revolution too strong a word to describe what is being envisioned here? I think not. Prisoners are freed, the blind see, and the oppressed find liberty and justice. Ask any one of those what this was and they would say that it was a revolution, at least in their lives.

But the revolution doesn’t just end there, it is even bigger than that. It tackles the system of this world that is so broken, refusing to work within it. When God proclaims the year of his favor he is demolishing the distinction between the have and and have nots, cancelling all debts and bringing grace and healing for all, if they will receive it.

And so the revolution begins.

There you have it: Jesus’ declaration of revolution. The revolution began with the Father’s dream for the world and continues as it is enacted by Jesus, the Father’s Son. He says, “Today, this scripture has been fulfilled...” That is, on the day that Jesus read those words in that ancient worship gathering, he took on his call - he committed that those words would be fulfilled by him - and moved out into the world to do exactly what they said. He gave his life, even to the point of death and beyond, to heal the blind, protect the defenseless, and to free those under the yoke of the tyranny of both man and sin.

Jesus declared a revolution right there. He declared a revolution and enacted it because he took the Father’s dream as his own...and the world will never be the same.

The question for us, however, is whether or not this revolution will capture our hearts. Will we be a people who join the revolution? Will we be a people who invest our lives and our resources in pursuit of Jesus' revolution? Will we be a people who challenge the status quo, standing with those in need in our own church, our own community, and in our sister community of Mhlosheni, Swaziland?

As followers of Christ, I believe God is calling us to do exactly that. I believe he is calling us to the front lines of his revolution of hope and grace.

And if we do, it might just be said of us one day: "There you have it, a whole church committed to the revolution."

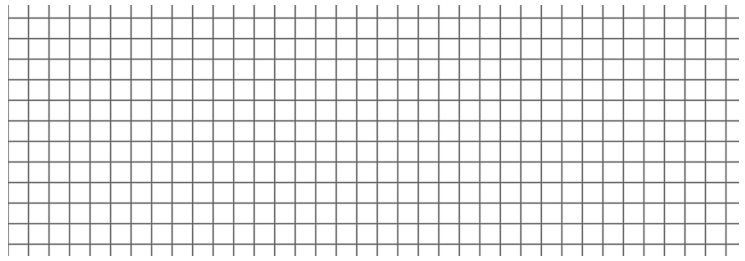
Response

Spend a few minutes re-reading today's passage, letting the Lord speak to you through these ancient yet very present words. Then pray, thanking the Lord for His dream and how Jesus took that on his shoulders. Pray also that the Lord would spark a revolution in your own heart so that you would desire nothing more and nothing less than to walk with Jesus into a world full of need, both materially and spiritually, sacrificing along the way to bring hope, love, and grace into reality.

*Traveling with you,
Pastor Reed*

RENOVATION

Tuesday, June 7



Yesterday, there was talk of revolution.

Not a military revolution where the powerful of this world subject the weak of this world to their control. Rather, a revolution of another kind, one of grace, healing, hope and love. One that works for the weak instead of oppressing them. One that refuses to cast judgment and hopelessness upon the outcast and instead shares the good news of grace made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection.

Have you considered whether or not you really want to be a part of such a thing?

I have to be honest. The extent of sacrifice modeled by Jesus for this dream is frightening. It cost him greatly to make the revolution of grace a reality. It cost him freedom. It cost him pain. It cost him comfort. Ultimately, it cost him his life. In view of this, I know that on my own, I'm not really ready for such a thing.

Are you? Be honest. Look into your heart. Is there a distance between God's dream for the world and where your heart is really at? If so, you're just like me.

So what do we do then? Do we just buckle down and pretend. Do we just grin and bear it because we feel guilty if we don't? I don't think that's what God wants.

Remember, God's dream is a dream of revolution; that revolution isn't only in the world though, it is also a revolution of the heart. In calling you to this dream he is also calling you to reconsider your own heart and to place your heart into his care so that it might be changed, so that it might beat more closely to the rhythm of Jesus' own heart.

Before any revolution in the world can happen, there must first be a revolution in your heart. Nothing happens in the world without it first happening in the heart. Jesus knows this, for from the heart both our words and actions spring forth (Matthew 12:35), sometimes for good, sometimes for less than good.

Dallas Willard, in *The Renovation of the Heart*, writes about this when he says: "...the greatest need you and I have - the greatest need of collective humanity - is renovation of our heart. That spiritual place within us from which outlook, choices, and actions have been formed by a world away from God. It must be transformed."

So don't worry if the thought of going all in, of sacrificing as part of Jesus' revolution seems daunting. Don't worry even if you really, really don't want to be a part of it right now. Instead, simply realize what God already knows: your heart still needs a little (or a lot) of transformation.

Mine does, I'll admit it gladly. Why? First, because it is true. The path laid out before us is daunting and the sacrifice will be great to go all in to this revolution. Second, because the knowledge that my heart needs further transformation drives me to the only solution available: looking to the Lord and asking him to renovate my heart as he sees fit.

And as we do, with hearts completely open and faces not hidden from him but turned toward him, we will see this promise come true: *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18, ESV*

That's the promise! That we might be transformed as we open up to the Lord, and not just transformed but transformed into the image of Christ! As that happens over the course of our lives, our hearts will naturally begin to desire more and more and more of the things he desires, including the revolution of grace and healing that requires so much sacrifice to enter into. Now that would be some renovation to the infrastructure of our hearts, wouldn't it?

Response

Take some time today to pray or journal about the condition of your heart before the Lord. Be very honest. Open up to him. Then, pray that he would transform your heart as you hand it over to him willingly. Pray, also that he would lead you into revolution for the good of the world by reshaping your heart into one that hopes and dreams like his.

*Traveling with you,
Pastor Reed*

A PREREQUISITE

Wednesday, June 8

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Matthew 16:24-25, ESV

I wonder if Jesus lost a few followers when he said that. My guess is that he did.

His words had to be so much more striking in his context than in ours. In our context a cross is something to hang on the wall or around one's neck but in Jesus' day it was something on which you hung to die. It symbolized and brought about all that a person would want to avoid. Not only that, but it was surely a symbol of the powers of this world that were unjust and opposed to God's dream of freedom for the captives, healing for the outcast, and grace given to sinners.

So this was not a quaint saying at all. It was pointed.

Jesus is calling any who want revolution and renovation - any who long for justice and mercy in their world and love and grace in their hearts - to come and die. That, quite frankly, is the image that Jesus is bringing to mind. It is uncomfortable, terrifying even. If we are to follow him, we follow him into our own death.

Those who didn't get what Jesus was saying here would walk, no sprint, in the other direction - any direction but the direction toward the cross. But those who discerned his meaning, those like Paul, would find great hope and consolation in Jesus' call to come and die. Why? Because the foundation of revolution is the renovation of our hearts and the renovation of one's heart can only happen when our hearts are stopped and then restarted anew by Jesus himself.

Paul says it this way in Galatians 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ.*

That is, his heart ceased to beat upon the cross he picked up in following Christ. He, just like anyone who has become a disciple of Jesus, has died. As such, Paul could say "I am dead." Not in a physical sense, but in the sense of living for himself and entrusting his future, his thoughts, and his actions to himself. That part of him is dead. He did not live to, or for, himself anymore. As Dallas Willard suggests "Being dead to self is the condition where the mere fact that I do not get what I want does not surprise or offend me and has no control over me..." This was Paul, for sure. He faded into the background and Jesus and his cross came to the fore.

Quite the call on his life. Quite the call on your life and mine.

So why did he make such a call? The short answer is that this is the pathway both to renovation and to revolution; it is the prerequisite to both.

We will consider the former in tomorrow's devotion. As for the latter, doesn't it make just a little sense that those who have died already would be more willing to put themselves on the line in order to pursue God's dream? Sure it does, they have nothing to lose! The one with nothing to lose can go all in.

And that's where we can be in Christ! We *can* go all in.

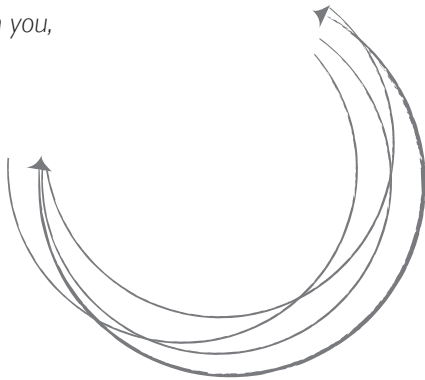
The question remains, though: Will we?

Response

Journal and pray on these questions:

- What would it mean in your life to "go all in" with Jesus?
- What, if anything might be holding you back?
- How do you think your life might change or be required to change if you did?
- How would your family and community, even your world, change?

*Traveling with you,
Pastor Reed*



RESURRECTION AND RENOVATION

Thursday, June 9

The call to come and die isn't an end in itself, it is a means to an end, both of revolution and renovation.

When my father had open heart surgery the surgeons stopped his heart in order to work on it. They had to. If it was still beating they could not have worked with the precision needed to complete their lifesaving task effectively. Quite simply, my father is alive today because they stopped his heart for a time.

While all analogies break down, I find this one helpful in thinking about why Jesus might call his followers to take up their cross and die to themselves. He does this so that he might do in their hearts what must be done to make them function correctly.

In giving our hearts to him he gives a new, restructured heart back. This new heart is one that beats to the rhythm of his Spirit. This heart is one that lives on his power. In a very real sense, we die to self and we are given new life in return; we die and are resurrected by Christ. He lives in us ("*Christ... lives in me*") and we can live a new life now on that basis ("*the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God*").

This is good news, for without his presence in my heart, my heart isn't ready to move forward into his dream. Without his work of renovation in my heart, I'm not ready for revolution.

This is THE hope we have for our dream of enjoying and living out God's dream for the world and for our lives.

Our hope is not that we would somehow do the work necessary to improve ourselves. Our hope is not that we can, by our own power, do the surgery necessary to repair our heart, our soul. Our hope for ourselves is never ourselves.

Our hope for our world is never in us and what we can do. Both hopes are found only in Jesus! In fact, all hope is found in Jesus!

What does this mean for us? It means that our hope for our future as a church and our hope for those we love is in Christ and Christ alone. To personalize it, your hope is Christ living in you, moving through you, carrying you through life and empowering you to do his will. To globalize it, the world's hope is that you would allow your heart to be transformed by Christ so that he lives through you every day, unveiling his grace and love through you.

The call to come and die is a means to the hope that we will truly live! It is a call beyond death and into all that is new -all that is resurrected - for ourselves and for the world!

Response

If you have never entrusted your life to Christ, today is the day! Let him know that you desire to follow him, that you desire to take up your cross and all that means and find new life in him. Let him know that you entrust yourself in his care, your Savior, Friend, and Lord. You can do this by communicating with him in a simple prayer or even by writing to him in your journal.

If you have already entrusted your life to Jesus, make today a day when you refrain from trying to make some difference on your own power. Instead, ask the Lord to move through, to guide your steps as you listen to his still small voice in your renovated heart. Ask him to empower you to share his love and hope with those he brings across your path today. Ask him to speak to you about your role in the revolution of his kingdom both today and as we move forward together in our life as a church.

*Traveling in his grace with you,
Pastor Reed*

LESS FOR MORE

Friday, June 10

Yesterday and the day before we considered the primary way our hearts are transformed: through a relationship with Jesus Christ. In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "we are bid to come and die" but in so doing we are given new life and find much gain. Our hearts are renewed and we are alive to God's dream for our lives and for his world in a brand new way.

As Jesus says, we trade up from a life for ourselves to a life about him and his kingdom.

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. Matthew 13:45-46, ESV

The kingdom of heaven can be a confusing phrase, but it doesn't have to be.

Consider the kingdom of Swaziland for example. Within the boundaries of that small country the citizens of that land live within the rule of their king. Some don't, of course, but by and large we have found that the people of Swaziland honor and revere their king. He is the one they look to for leadership, even protection. He is the one they celebrate when they are in their country and when they are abroad.

While this is the case for Swazis, it is not the case for citizens of other countries. They live under the rule of the Swazi king. They may not and probably don't think much of him. They certainly don't look to him for guidance or protection because the boundary of the Kingdom of Swaziland is the end of the *effective range* of his rule.

The kingdom of which Jesus talks of here - the kingdom of heaven - is similar. Those who have entered this kingdom (a kingdom where everyone who wants to be is welcomed) honor and revere the King himself, our Heavenly Father. Not only that, but they seek to carry out his will and even positively represent him as they go about their business. So the kingdom of heaven, like an earthly kingdom, has citizens who carry out the will and enjoy the protection of their King. Also, like an earthly kingdom, it has boundaries, only its boundaries are the range of God's will as freely lived out in our hearts and in our world, instead of lines drawn on a map. He doesn't force us to enter the kingdom or live it out, but when we do, its boundaries expand.

Now that this is cleared up, we should notice just how valuable the kingdom, or God's presence and rule in our lives, is. Just as the most valuable pearl in the world would be worth *everything* to a pearl dealer, entering into the kingdom of heaven is the most valuable thing a human soul can ever have. So valuable, in fact, that it would be worth giving up everything just to have citizenship in it.

We may not see it that way, but the one who sees perfectly, Jesus himself, certainly does. He says you would be a fool not to trade what is worth less (having our own way, own comforts, own treasures, own acclaim, own dreams, etc.) to obtain that which is worth infinitely more. Put bluntly, there is nothing in this life that you could possibly find that would be worth more than entering God's dream for your life. Not one thing.

Together, we are being invited as a congregation to move deeper into God's kingdom, deeper into his desire to renovate our hearts and redeem his world. We are being invited to invest in God's kingdom, in God's dream.

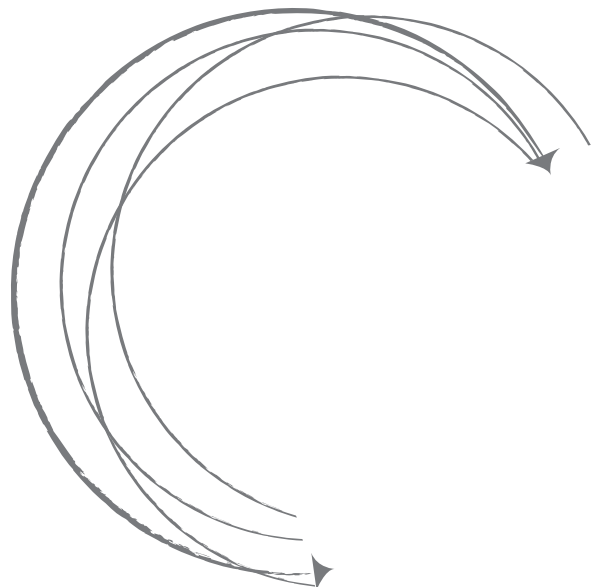
Will this cost us? Of course it will. There will be an investment, just like the pearl merchant invested everything he had to obtain that pearl of greatest worth.

So yes, we will need to invest. But remember, *it is an investment of less for more!* We will sacrifice with regard to time and treasure, but we will gain the joy of being led in this life by our faithful, kind, and loving Lord!

Response

Spend at least ten minutes in prayer. Ask the Lord to guide you in the investment strategy for your life. Ask him to reveal the things that he, as your King, would want you to invest both your time and your treasure in. Because he will move differently in your life than others, ask him to help you balance your investments of these things among the needs, issues, and relationships he points out. Finally, ask him to help you follow through on what he reveals to you.

*Listening with you,
Pastor Reed*



CULTURE

Saturday, June 11

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ... Philippians 3:20, ESV

The Romans had a vision that they held to. They believed Rome, and more specifically Roman culture, to be a beacon of light to the world. They believed that the whole world would be better off if Rome took over and forced its way into the other cultures. They did this through military conquest and subsequent colonization.

Take for example, Philippi, which was a Roman colony. Though far away from Rome itself, Philippi was meant to be a reflection of Rome. To make this happen, Rome would send its citizens to Philippi to share the culture and values of Rome with the people in that region. As such, the people who colonized this Roman outpost enjoyed all the rights of those who were citizens of Rome. Not only that, they also shared in the responsibilities of Rome. It was in this way that the ways of Rome, the ideals of Rome, were spread throughout the world.

First conquest. Then colonization. Citizenship in Rome, while in Philippi, was the plan.

Against this backdrop Paul writes to the Christians in Philippi, saying, *“our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

As people who lived in a Roman colony and were charged with the task of bringing Roman culture into a place that didn't have it, they would have immediately understood what Paul was getting at.

Paul was implying that those who were Christians were to move about in such a way that they brought the culture of heaven to the place in which they found themselves. For the people that Paul was writing to, that place was Philippi.

Citizenship in heaven, while here on earth, is God's plan for us. It was then and it is now. And unlike what Rome did, heaven doesn't take ground by military conquest; instead, heaven expands the kingdom through sacrifice for the good of others, most notably in and through the sacrifice of Christ.

All this talk about revolution and renovation, about God's dream and his kingdom essentially comes down to this. We are the means through which the culture of heaven can break into this broken world, bringing justice and mercy into the fray simply by our faithful witness to Christ and of his love. As citizens of heaven God is calling us to live out the values of heaven, which are values that speak to grace and acceptance, to healing and hope, to sacrifice and forgiveness.

Quite simply, God's plan is to reveal what heaven is all about through his people - through you and me,

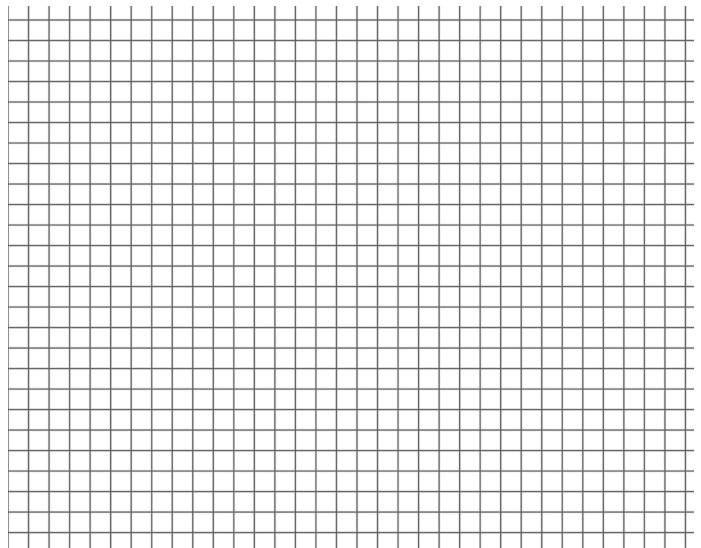
through us. It is not to keep us held together in a safe little enclave, but to send us out into the world so that other hearts can discover the King and his kingdom just as we have.

Let's lean into the role God has given us. Let's be an outpost of heaven here on earth, struggling together, sacrificing together, to embody the culture heaven, for we are it's citizens. As we seek to do this, empowered by Christ moving through our renovated hearts, let's pray that a revolution begins in our church, in our community, and in Mhlosheni!

Response

Spend some time journaling about how the truth that you are a citizen of heaven impacts your thinking about your mission here on earth. In what ways might you be encouraged to bring the culture of heaven into your family life? In what ways might you be encouraged to bring it to work or school? To friendships? To strangers? To Mhlosheni, Troutdale, and places in between?

*Traveling with you,
Pastor Reed*



The Infrastructure Project is our next step in the pursuit of His dream to provide not only the world, and not only our congregation, with an underlying framework of grace, hope, faith and love, but also your own life and family. It is his work to renew and restore the world by building what matters!

