

feeding . . . gathering . . . carrying . . . leading . (Isaiah 40:11)

September 29, 2009

Dearest family,

There's so much going on at the moment it seems, but hopefully it is all accessible and absorbable! Tonight will be the Eucharist that follows up the presentations on generational sin and generational healing. On Sunday I launched a new series on the subject of "asking". Next weekend is the retreat and then Bo will be starting a new series too on the epistles of John. I think there will be plenty of spiritual nutrition on the table for all to feed and to digest something for spiritual growth and maturity.

I don't know where to begin to summarize some of the things I covered last Sunday by way of introduction. If you need to, please get the CD/cassette. I'm essentially trying to present a "theology of asking" and as I shared with you, the more one examines the scriptural contexts where this is addressed and taught, encouraged and commanded, the more one realizes how much life-changing, discipleship-nurturing truth there is about this. I explained to you how I came to revisit this

whole subject of asking in prayer. Let me repeat what I prayed would characterize our treatment and approach in this series.

1. It will be **scriptural**. Our inquiry will take us to many different passages that will require some exposition. We need to be founded and grounded in the text.
2. It will be **devotional**. By that I mean that I want our discussion to be conducted by those who are devoted to Jesus and devout about deepening their communication and therefore their relationship with God. I'm not interested in you simply having a theology of asking. I want you to receive this less as a corpus of good teaching, but more as a blood-bank. This is about a theology that transfuses life. I'm reminded again of that quote from Spurgeon that I quote so often, that we should study the Word until our very blood becomes bible.
3. It will be **pastoral**. I'm concerned about pastoral application of these truths and the fact is that this subject of asking raises some challenging questions of its own that require wisdom and tenderness in their resolutions. I want the fruit of nurture and nourishment for spiritual growth and maturity.
4. It will be **partial**. By nature, if I get into something, I love to apply myself to it and gnaw it to the bone. However, it is not my intention to produce those 20 messages or so I referred to on Sunday! I cannot and will not attempt to be exhaustive about this subject. My concern is simply to kick-start you. I'm going to be a dump-truck, and then leave you with a mess to landscape, and then run away and hide as quickly as possible!
5. It will be **influential**. Make no mistake about it. Despite the above disclaimer I feel intensely about the outcomes. I want to influence with intent. My prayer is that by examining this particular feature of asking, new horizons of possibilities will be opened up to you in your understanding of prayer, in your practice of prayer, in your experience and expectation of prayer.
6. It will be **emotional**. Surprise, surprise! There are two very different kinds of emotion that are in play

here. For some there may be the inchoate, the confusing, the disappointing emotions that cling like spores to the things that have been asked for that have not been delivered. We have to acknowledge these realities. Truth bids us do so. We are not William James-ian pragmatists, believing faith in the fact creates the fact. Name it and claim it has its roots more in American materialist-secularist philosophy than in biblical faith. I am asking that this subject will stir your affections; that the blade of the word will plough areas of hardness in your heart where expectation has been trampled down and where the fresh rain of trust needs to fall; that filial responses to God will be renewed – you’ll see why this is vital to asking. Frankly, thinking of the other kind of emotion, I’m asking that what Jesus said would be, will be for you, “Ask...and your joy will be complete.” (Jn. 16:24)

7. It will be **crucial**. I’ve been trying hard to avoid the use of the word prayer only because it has become so woolly and generalized in many people’s minds and practice. All sorts of expressions pass for prayer that maybe are not prayer, but more like recitations and observations and incantations and reflections. What I am unashamed to emphasize in this series is that fundamental to a biblical understanding of prayer is **asking**. Prayer is asking! Asking is crucial to prayer. When our confidence in asking erodes, then prayer dissipates into general conversation. We may bring our meaning-well and wishing-well sentiments but somehow we back off the specific asking. Why do we back off? There are reasons for this that that we can look at in coming days. But make no mistake about it. By talking about asking we’re dealing with the heart of prayer. Sometimes people talk about prayer and praise, prayer and meditation, which is all fine and good and right but sometimes we need to state the obvious – prayer is about asking! Deny that, dilute that and you will find that the bones of your prayer life will start to suffer from spiritual osteoporosis.

What was really interesting to me was that when I began to focus afresh on this matter of asking, I noticed how little there was that was actually written about it or taught about it. I surveyed over 20 high-circulation books on prayer and found very little. Asking was always just assumed. By the way, if you need to buy a good one, get Andrew Murray’s “With Christ in the School of Prayer.” I re-read it a while ago and it was wonderful because it was all about Jesus; all about asking in Jesus’ Name. (I will do a session on that.)

So join me in the coming weeks as we go back to the Word (I found myself checking over 800 verses that deal with the subject in one way or other.) It is a timely pursuit in my life right now, and I am expecting to be transformed by it. One year to the weekend, I told some folk that I was going to find time to prepare a fresh series dealing with these matters, but given the mass of material, there was a lot of slow study and exegesis to do, not counting the time it takes to apply what one is learning and marinate in it. I’m ashamed to say that I’ve hardly made a dent, but even attempting to address the subject now, is a needful exercise for my life as much as yours, so forgive me if these sessions minister only to my need to work out and discharge what I am learning and re-learning! Listen in if you want to! JUST ASK!

Pastorally yours,

Stuart

<http://www.christshepherd.org/pastlet.htm> (and follow links to download MP3 audio of sermon)

COSC Family Retreat This Weekend, October 3-4

There will be no Sunday Service in the church building. See you at the retreat!

Announcements

Please pray for VAL LUNDQUIST for complete healing from a serious back injury. You may contact the office for updated progress.

BAPTISM SERVICE: We will be conducting a baptism service on October 25th. COSC members who are interested in being baptized should contact the church office as soon as possible for more details.

HOMEGROUP: The Keffler homegroup, which meets in Arlington, is switching their meeting time to Thursdays at 7:30 PM. Call Aaron or Maria at 703-971-3818 if you are interested in attending.

MEN'S MINISTRY: Save the date, 17 October, for a Collaborative Men's reakfast (Grace, Advent, Ascension, WCF, Rez and COSC) at Casa Del Pueblo Methodist Church, 1459 Columbia Rd. NW from 9 AM - 11 AM. Call Luke ((562) 441-6084) or email Matthew (matthew.tropiano@navy.mil) if you can provide a casserole, and please pray for this event.

NEWCOMER'S CLASS: For anyone interested in becoming a member of COSC, there will be a newcomers class on Thursday, October 15th at 7:30 PM in the Fellowship hall. If you are interested in attending, you must call the church office.

COMMUNION SET-UP: We are looking to set up a communion preparation team for the next 6 months. If you would be interested in helping, please contact Deborah at the church office or by e-mail at deborah@christoursshepherd.org.

NIGHT OF PRAYER: Join us as we pray together on Saturday, October 10th from 7 - 9 PM.

For general questions or building use inquiries, send an e-mail to office@christoursshepherd.org.

To communicate updates for the pastoral letter and/or the church bulletin, send an e-mail to ben@christoursshepherd.org. The church bulletin will be completed by end of day on Thursdays.

Bulletin Board

*Postings not officially sanctioned by COSC.
Ads will be posted for up to 4 weeks. After that time period, please contact the church office to see if space will permit the ad to remain posted.*

ROOMMATE WANTED: Room available for CF. Large attic room in a house with 2 CF's + 1 cat. Nice house at 6th & E Streets, NE. \$734 a month + utilities. Possibility of furnished or short-term. If interested, contact Liz at lizzokenedy@gmail.com.

ROOMMATE WANTED: CF in mid-20s looking for 1 or 2 CFs to share a 2 or 3 bdr apt./house in the city, preferably on Capital Hill. Would like to start least November 1 or later. If interested, contact Ani at ani.shahinian@gmail.com.

HOUSING NEEDED: Seeking short-term (2-6 month) room rental from mature Christian woman or couple, or longer-term with CF young professionals. Metro accessible is needed; my car is still in California! Kristen, kharitao@yahoo.com or 650-793-3756
