



Week #4: "Outstanding in His Field"

Daily Devotions for February 5-10, 2024

Monday, February 5 Read Psalm 41

The central theme of this psalm is that those who show mercy will receive mercy, hence the declaration in v.1 that sets up the psalmist's plea in the subsequent verses (see also Matthew 5:7 for a similar theme). How does thinking first of the other shape both our own approach to God and the things we ask for?

Tuesday February 6 Read Isaiah 58

Living a "holy life" is more than just going through religious ritual. Why is God angry at the Israelites here and what might that suggest about how God evaluates our faithfulness today? Why do so many default to simply going through the motions and what is the real motivation for such an approach?

Wednesday, February 7 Read Matthew 25:31-46

Most of us can get a little frightened at the judgement in this passage, but take a moment to reflect on where the people dubbed "goats" went astray. What attitudes and perspectives (on Jesus and on the people around them) might have driven them to make such a disastrous choice? Where do we encounter similar choices?

Thursday, February 8 Read Galatians 5:19-25

Last week we pointed out that what comes out of us is directly connected to where our spirits are planted. Paul continues the theme, drawing a distinction between being rooted in the world ('the flesh') and being rooted in God's purposes and presence ('the Spirit'). What does v.25 mean and how does taking it seriously help us to "crucify the passions of the flesh?"

Friday, February 9 Read Hebrews 10:22-25

We referenced v.25 last week as we stressed the need for church fellowship, but notice in v. 24 what one important purpose of that fellowship is. Why do we need one another to "provoke" us into doing the works of holy living? How might having the "full assurance of faith (v.22)," what Welsey called 'holiness of heart' give us the confidence to engage in challenging and impactful ministry and witness? Give some specific examples of how this might work.

Saturday, February 10 Read James 2:14-22

If someone claimed to be an Olympic class runner but never entered a race, you might doubt his truthfulness and probably much more as well. How is that same dynamic invoked here as James links faith and Christian service? How does dividing faith and works ultimately weaken our witness and mission?



Lesson #4: "Outstanding in His Field"

Small Group Study & Discussion Guide

Sermon Notes for

"Outstanding in His Field"

February 4, 2024

1. Genuine inward holiness must show itself in outward holiness.

"So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." -James 2:17

2. Consciously and diligently connecting to the Holy Spirit empowers and equips us to live a tangible witness.

"If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit." -Galatians 5:25

3. Every gift and skill we have is God-given for the purpose of growing the Kingdom.

"Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds." -Hebrews 10:23-24

Part I. Pernicious Roots

1. **Share:** *For some reason there have been debates in Christian circles about the relative importance of faith and good works, yet they really are two sides of the same coin. With that in mind, discuss the following:*
 - **Read James 2:14-22** If someone claimed to be an Olympic class runner but never entered a race, you might doubt his truthfulness and probably much more as well. How is that same dynamic invoked here as James links faith and Christian service? How does dividing faith and works ultimately weaken our witness and mission?
 - John Wesley summed up a life of 'outward holiness' as one in which you *"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."* Look at Sermon note #1 and share some of the ways an inwardly cultivated holiness (prayer, scripture, worship) informs and shapes such a life.

Part II. Reclaiming Vile-tality

1. **Look at Sermon note#2. Discuss the following:**
 - **Read Isaiah 58.** Share: 'Living a "holy life" is more than just going through religious ritual.' Why is God angry at the Israelites here and what might that suggest about how God evaluates our faithfulness today? Why do so many default to simply going through the motions and what is the real motivation for such an approach?
2. **Read Galatians 5:19-25** Share: "Last week we pointed out that what comes out of us is directly connected to where our spirits are planted. Paul continues the theme, drawing a distinction between being rooted in the world ('the flesh') and being rooted in God's purposes and presence ('the Spirit')." Discuss: What does v.25 mean and how does taking it seriously help us to "crucify the passions of the flesh?"
3. **Read Matthew 25:31-46** What attitudes and perspectives (on Jesus and on the people around them) might have driven them to make such a disastrous choice? Where do we encounter similar choices?