

Monday, November 23, 2009

While this week may begin feeling normal, as you know, by Friday, everything changes and from then till early January you and I will be in a “tail spin”. The pace of life will crank up, the intensity of advertising and pressure to spend what you do not presently have for something that will likely not make much difference a year from now, has the potential to overwhelm you.

In the midst of the frenzy, may I lead you this week through reflection on how you can keep a God honoring focus with a calm heart?

I Chronicles 15 and 16 is the wonderful account of King David bringing the precious “ark of the covenant” into the “City of David” for the first time. As you recall, this “ark” was fabricated under the oversight of Moses nearly 300 years before! It symbolized the very Presence of God among His people. David had such a passion for frequent worship and a determination to live with God’s Presence powerfully accessible, that he “pitched a tent” just for the “ark” as he was establishing Jerusalem as his new home and capital of Israel. Take three minutes and read the story...does it sound like the “Rose Bowl parade” of his day?

Grab this...David didn’t want the busyness of being king, the too frequent battles and wars, the challenges of building a city, the needs of people...to distract him from a sense of God’s presence or the privilege of worship! He knew if he could keep his focus on the worship taking place at the tent with the ark, his mind and heart would remain clear and positioned well for leadership of a nation! It would be in the distractions, that he might succumb to pride or lust or selfishness or poor judgment.

This weekend, I led you through a study of Psalm 77. Notice whose names are atop that Psalm...Asaph and Jeduthun. Now look again at I Chronicles 16:7,37-42! These were men, evidently, who were significant to King David. They were charged with making sure good worship, continuous worship was happening around that little tent which housed the “ark of the covenant of God”. I presume Asaph was the one who wrote Psalm 77, and most or all of it was put to music and often sung at the ‘tent of worship’. If in these busy weeks you find yourself overwhelmed...work your way through Ps. 77, and find Hope!

Tuesday, November 24, 2009

Aren’t you grateful you have a memory, even if it seems to fail you from time to time? This week is about remembering, right? Thanksgiving calls us to stop for a day and reflect, smell the turkey, remember family times...and while that likely brings a smile to your face, it probably also brings pain. Some dear people who used to be around the table, are not this year. That’s why I chose Psalm 77 for us this week...I’m grateful Mr. Asaph wasn’t afraid to ask God the hard questions when his heart was breaking!

I don’t know the circumstances which birthed Psalm 77, but I do know the truth of this Psalm is powerful. If you find yourself in a dark place of expressing the questions Asaph asked, may I assure you it’s OK? God welcomes our honesty and I believe He despises when we pretend with Him, don’t you think that’s what Psalm 139 is all about?

Did you notice the dramatic change between vs. 9 & 10 of Psalm 77? Do you see “Selah” at the end of vs. 3, 9 and 15? “Selah” means...rest, reflect, consider, ponder. It’s like the rest stop alongside the Interstate highway, or the “Scenic overlook”. It’s halftime of the football game or the oasis in the desert. For many, Thanksgiving Day is a “Selah”, as you gather with friends, eat, laugh, relax and remember good times of the past. It’s a fresh perspective, before you rush back into the rat race of life. What do you suppose happened in the “Selah” between vs 9 & 10?

To what do you “appeal” when you need a fresh perspective on your life? Asaph appealed to the past and he looked for the evidence of God’s involvement over the “years of the right hand of the Most High.” ‘Right hand’ is the place of power, authority, favor and blessing. So, what do you see as you look back? Seems to me Asaph wasn’t looking only at his personal life history, but the history of his larger family or even of Israel. And what did he see? “Deeds of the Lord”, “miracles of long ago”, “mighty deeds”, “holy ways” etc. Take a moment and dissect that. What do each of those phrases mean to you? As you look back, do you see evidence of those in your history...how recently? Could I invite you to write down a few of the specific things God has done in your history that match with what Asaph saw?

Wednesday, November 25, 2009

It’s Thanksgiving Eve...how will you position yourself for tomorrow and the weeks that lead you to Christmas? I invite you to begin your Thanksgiving with an expression of thank you worship tonight at Calvary...7pm, bring the whole family, and come with some of your personal stories of thanks from this year.

We’ve been in Psalm 77, and today could I invite you to consider what follows...Psalm 78. It’s fairly lengthy, but look closely at the first 8 verses. They fit well with Thanksgiving, don’t they? Parents...are we being sure our kids know the wonder of our great God and the joy you have in your relationship with Jesus? As you read through the rest of Psalm 78, you’ll see Asaph is trying to be sure the incredible history of God’s miraculous involvement with Israel’s history is not lost or forgotten as the generations pass. Has someone written down the work of God in YOUR family history, so it’s not lost as the older generations “depart”? Maybe you need to spend some time this Thanksgiving, writing some of the “God stories” that make up your family story? How valuable do you suppose that might be for the generations that follow you? Maybe I’ll leave space here for you to jot down three or four specific events that will jog your memory as you begin to chronicle God’s story in your life:

Do you notice how the remarkable story of Psalm 78 is the factual, historical response to Asaph’s questions of Psalm 77:7-9? While hope and faith are great answers to questions such as “Will the LORD reject forever?” “Has His unfailing love vanished forever?” “Has His promise failed for all time?”, the best response to such questions is, of course, tangible specifics which only God can accomplish in the circumstances of your life! That which gives us hope for tomorrow is the memory of what God did yesterday, that’s why Thanksgiving remembering is so powerful and important. Don’t miss this opportunity friends!

Thursday, November 26, 2009

Take time to “Selah” today (remember what I wrote yesterday?). Read Deuteronomy 8. Moses is an old man and as he stands before the people of Israel they are the “next generation”. Their parents were the ones who had walked out of Egypt as freed slaves, led by Moses to Mount Sinai. Their parents had disbelieved God’s ability to lead them into the “Promised Land” (Numbers 13,14) and so they had spent 4 decades wandering and dying in the desert. Thankfully, their parents finally all died, and Deuteronomy is Moses’ farewell speeches, challenging the next generation to get it right and not fail as their parents did.

Deuteronomy 8 seems so appropriate for Thanksgiving Day. It should serve as a great caution to us as we sit back with full stomachs, surrounded by family and friends. I’m sure you know it is in times like that you are most vulnerable! Perspective can easily become distorted...and that’s why the honest challenge of Deut. 8 is so important in this “Selah” of Thanksgiving Day.

“Be careful”...do you hear your mother’s voice when you were a young child? When God says “be careful”, it’s time to pay close attention! How many times do you hear it in Deut. 8? What are the dangers God was warning them about? What would be the consequences if they disregard? Do you see how Deuteronomy fits so perfectly with Thanksgiving Day and the intensity of American life which begins tomorrow in the shopping frenzy of ‘black Friday’? For some retailers, nation wide spending pushes their entire year into the ‘black’ tomorrow! For many people tomorrow will push them into the black hole of deep debt, frightening creditor calls, huge interest charges on unpaid credit card balances. It’s suffocating!

Remember Psalm 78:1-7 and the focus on legacy? One generation will tell the next... What are your children and grandchildren learning about God honoring stewardship as they watch you navigate these next days and weeks financially? Many of you took your kids or grandkids shopping to fill a shoebox and send it overseas...thank you. They won’t forget that example! Now, how can you continue to model ETERNAL VALUES as you carefully lead your family to Christmas?

Friday, November 27, 2009

It might do you well to read Deuteronomy 8 one more time this morning, before you rush out the door. Could I invite you to consider a powerful story Jesus told...Luke 12:13-34. We live in an agricultural area, so it shouldn’t be hard for you to understand about crops, barns, bigger barns etc. We also have several cemeteries, so it shouldn’t be hard to consider what you want your life to have been all about when you begin to get the sense the end of your earthly journey is near. NOW is the time to think about what you want to see THEN! And remember, you’ll have all eternity to reflect on how well you used the one lifetime you were entrusted with from God.

Psalm 37 is a good sequel to Luke 12. I urge you to read it today. “*Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart.*” What a good word!! There are so many good statements in Psalm 37 that challenge us to live our lives with eternal values in mind and the treasure of a personal relationship with God having captivated our heart. How’s your heart today friends...as we move into the season of “Advent” leading to Christmas?

Advent, as you know, means “the approach of something significant”. Christmas is that “something significant” that we will be celebrating over this next month. You can’t ignore it or miss it...everywhere you go you’ll hear the sounds of Christmas, the relentless invitations to enjoy Christmas, and of course we’ll do our best to help you focus on the “wonder of the Savior” of Christmas. May I invite you to something strategic? Take a piece of paper and draw a map of your neighborhood, and put the names of the families on each house on your drawing. Now take them an invitation card for our Christmas events and extend a personal invitation to them for the Concert or Christmas Eve services. Maybe invite them to your home for pie and cider following. Most of all, could I ask you to pray every day for them, asking God to soften their hearts this Advent season, to the “advent of Jesus Christ”! Is your heart ready for this Christmas and new things God wants to do in your life and through you in our world, for His great glory?



Pastor Doug Anderson

November 23 - 27, 2009



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