



THE JOURNEY CHURCH

SERMON GUIDE 3.27.2022

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST

Beholding Him

SCRIPTURE:

2 Corinthians 3:16-18

RECAP:

We continue in our series Communion With Christ. In this series we are looking at what it means to walk in relationship with Jesus. Too many people settle for less than what they were made and saved for. We often settle for beliefs and behaviors instead of communion with God. Jesus says many will one day hear "depart from me" because he never KNEW them. Paul said that the worth that surpasses every other worth is KNOWING Christ Jesus. We talked about having our hearts that yearn to know him. David's prayer in Psalm 63:1 is a good litmus test of our own heart. We want our hearts to echo this kind of prayer and desire for more of Him. This is the storyline of the Bible. Now that we've established that in the first few messages, we want to continue looking at what happens as we commune with Christ. As we learn to abide in Him, what kind of things should we expect to unfold?

Kyra and I were going to her reading tutoring session recently and she told me she didn't want to go. I told her it is good to go, because she's getting so much better at reading. I told her that it's good to always keep learning. I said "No matter how good at something you are, you can always learn something new." And then, because I felt my "dad" wisdom flowing, I said, "We should be learning something every day." Kyra, being the witty and intelligent girl that she is, asked me, "So what did you learn today then, Dad?" My mind was immediately scrambling to find something, but my mouth started moving before I had decided what it was going to say. So I said, "I...learned...that....Jesus...(I'm racking my brain to remember my Scripture reading from that morning)...is....the Lord." She said, "Yeah, that's what I thought." She got me.

This idea that we can learn something everyday, I don't recommend you say that to others unless you are ready to spit out what you've learned that day. But this concept of learning things is often what we believe discipleship is about. Discipleship is a word thrown around in churches, but often not understood. In a nutshell, discipleship means: become like Jesus. Yes, discipleship includes learning new things, but discipleship is ultimately about growing in grace, sanctification, maturing in our faith, and growing in Christlikeness. These are all phrases and terms used to describe discipleship. So you could define discipleship like this:

Discipleship is the ongoing process of transformation that occurs in believers where we increasingly become like Jesus. So the question that naturally follows is this: How do people become like Jesus? How do people transform and change? How did any of us change? That is what we are going to examine today.

Have you ever noticed that the longer we hang around a group of people or persons the more of their mannerisms and habits we pick up? We pick up laughs, body language, cadences of speech, habits, word choice, and all sorts of things. You become like what you behold. So when it comes to the question of how we become like Christ, we must see and savor him, then we become like him.

Scripture exegesis: 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 (ESV)

- When we turn to the Lord, trust him for our salvation, surrender our hearts and lives, the veil is removed. By the way, what do veils keep you from doing? Seeing. Right. SO the veil is removed when we turn to the Lord, which means we can see.

- The Holy Spirit who removes the veil gives us freedom to see. Before we were hindered, blind, and unable to move towards God. But now we are free. This is a reminder of the grace of God in opening our eyes and removing the veil. Paul was once unable to see the beauty and glory of Christ. But as he was in route to persecute the church, he met the Lord. The Lord blinded his physical eyes with the radiance of his glory, but in the irony of it, he simultaneously opened the eyes of his heart to see the beauty of Christ. This is the grace of God that has occurred in our lives, if we are in Christ. He rescued you, and opened your blind eyes to see him. This is the particular work of the Holy Spirit.

- And with an unveiled face, we are beholding the glory of the Lord. We are fixating on the glory of Jesus. How do we behold the Lord? We discussed this in the previous message. We read the Scriptures, we meditate on the Scriptures, we pray, we fast, and things of that nature.

I'm going to get into more things today, but it is important we remember that the goal is communion with Christ. Beholding Christ is the process of walking in communion with Christ. And as we do that, we are being transformed. We are changed. We grow. We mature. To what? We are transformed into the same image we are beholding, namely Christ.

- This happens, he says, "one degree of glory to another." It happens incrementally. It happens step by step. It happens by degrees. It isn't a one-time, overnight experience. This is a day-by-day experience. This is why communion with God, communion with Christ is a daily. Abiding in Christ is a daily walk of faith. Sanctification is gradual.

- All of this is from the Lord. The Holy Spirit does this work. It is His office and role to send our eyes to Jesus and see him, then become like him. This is how we change.

You become like what you behold. We do this so naturally. Our hearts will behold something. It is what our hearts want to do most naturally. You were made to worship, so you WILL worship something. So the battle we fight is for the eyes of our heart. What will we focus our eyes on? The battle is to see AND savor Christ. We don't only want to see him, but we want to savor what we see. God is glorified not by our seeing, but by our savoring.

But this is a battle for us. If we do not fight to fix our eyes on Jesus daily our A.D.D. souls will look at a million lesser things. We are not simply looking, we are beholding. We are meditating, marinating, examining, and savoring. We are looking with attention. We are looking to live. In Numbers 21, God's people are wandering through the wilderness. They are getting tired of manna. They are complaining, sulking, fussing, and getting grouchy at God - the God who rescued them! Insulted by their unbelief and ingratitude, the Father sends poisonous snakes to bite the people. Many begin dying on the spot from the bites. They immediately realize they brought this on themselves, they pleaded for mercy and Moses, the intercessor for them, prayed to God. The answer came. The Lord told Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live." He has him make a bronze serpent on a pole for people to look at and live. Why? He could have done anything. Why this? Because, God, the wise teacher and masterful parable teacher, showed us what the cross would be all about. Jesus tells us this much when he says in John 3:14-15, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life." Look and live.

Augustine — "Our whole business in this life is to restore to health the eye of the heart whereby God may be seen." The more we set the eyes of our heart on Jesus, the more

we become like him. Communion with Christ grows and matures us into the image of Christ.

Something I said earlier in the series was, Communion with Christ isn't just a piece of the Christian life, but the centerpiece. This means that it is the engine at the center of all other aspects of the Christian life. And I believe we need to start understanding other things through that lens. I want to highlight several examples of this, and see if we can begin to reorient and reframe our biblical understanding of these things.

1. Sunday Worship Gatherings

Gathering together as believers to worship the Lord is vital to our communion with God.

Colossians 3:15-16 (ESV) - And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. How? 1. teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. This is one way the Word of Christ dwells in us rich is through having the Word taught to us and by discussing it with one another. 2. singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your heart to God. One of the ways the Word dwells richly in our hearts is that we sing it. We sing gospel truths. As we sing them with and to one another, we are preaching to ourselves.

We gather weekly so the Word can dwell in our hearts richly. So the peace of Christ will rule in our hearts. It happens through preaching and exhortation. And it happens through singing, reciting truth in creeds, taking the Lord's Supper, and baptizing people.

C.S. Lewis — “The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of. Our attention would have been on God.”

2. Community

We talk about getting connected in community through Life Groups and Discipleship Groups. It is vital to our growth spiritually.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV) - And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Acts 2:42-47 talks about the regular meeting of the early believers to meet needs of one another and to grow in their faith in Christ.

There is a pastor who is quoted as saying, "Biblical community is more important than reading the Bible." I disagree with this statement, but here's what the pastor goes on to explain. For the first 300 years of the Christian faith, the average believer did not have a personal copy of a single New Testament book, certainly not an entire collection of the New Testament writings. They didn't have Bibles, but they had each other. Now, here is my response to this, they did hear regularly the Word of God through gathering with each other, that was a centerpiece of their gatherings, and through the Word proclaimed and believed, they matured. However, I do appreciate the emphasis this pastor is putting on biblical community, that most people have often forgotten and even minimized the crucial importance of today.

We live in a culture, Christians included, that doesn't put a high priority on gathering weekly to worship the Lord with one another. And in addition to that, even fewer Christians put a priority on gathering in smaller groups of believers to disciple and mature one another. But understand that one of the primary reasons for being in community is to further grow in our communion with Christ. So take those steps.

3. Fighting Sin

If you do not fight sin, it will severely hurt your closeness with Christ. Unrepentant sin is a communion crusher. So we fight sin FOR communion with God.

1 John 1:5-10 -

If you are not actively fighting against sin, and putting it to death, it will kill you. It is like weeds in a garden. If you do not actively pluck the weeds, they will overrun the garden. The same is true with sin: if you do not actively fight sin in your heart, it will overrun the heart. This is why John Calvin said "The heart is an idol factory." Factories pump out goods and products. Their job is to mass produce as much as they can. The heart mass produces sinful impulses and desires and idols. If we do not guard it, and contend with it, sin will multiply.

**** See sin accurately.** Stop viewing sin as some pleasurable thing you can't have and start seeing as the thing hell-bent (quite literally) on severing you from communion with Christ. Get the right perspective on what sin wants to do in your life. Remember that God

warned Cain that sin was crouching at the door waiting to master him? It is an active enemy. It is a cougar stalking you in the jungle, watching and waiting for a chance to pounce. It isn't a tamed zoo exhibit letting you pet it without harm.

Jesus says in John 10:10 that Satan wants to steal, kill, and destroy you. He wants to steal, kill, and destroy your communion with Christ and joy.

****Confess your actual sins.** Name your sins to God. Describe them in particular terms, not generic/vague ways (Lord, forgive me of my sins). This isn't for God's sake, but yours. This will help make sure you're not walking in habitual sin.

****Know your vulnerabilities.** You need to be aware of your weaknesses and natural landmines. You have an enemy who doesn't fight fair. If you struggle in a certain area, he's not going to leave it alone. He will exploit it. Be self-aware of where your weaknesses are. In the military, in sports, in business, good leaders know where the weaknesses of their teams are so they can minimize the exposure of them. Do you know your vulnerabilities?

****Fight sin with the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.** Find Scripture that addresses your vulnerabilities (people pleasing, lust, pride, anger, gossip, etc.).

****Fight sin by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16).** The more you truly call and rely upon the Holy Spirit for help, the stronger you'll be to resist sin.

****Fight sin in community with others.** There is power in confessing sin to others who love you and are committed to growing in their faith too, James 5. This is another reason why being in community helps with growing in communion.

****Don't focus on not sinning, but set your eyes on fellowship with God.** Thomas Chalmers said: "The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. But may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself?" The expulsive power of a greater affection.

In this life, until the day we die or Jesus returns, we will fight against (and need to fight against) indwelling sin. The reality of indwelling sin is that we will not reach practical perfection on this side of Heaven. We will not achieve sinlessness in this life. The process of continued growth and discipleship is called sanctification. This means we are constantly being perfected, but won't reach perfection until death or Jesus' coming.

This can leave many believers dejected. We feel we should be further than we are sometimes. We feel we should have kicked some of these old ways by now. But friends,

the battle is real, and the pain of not being further is real. Satan can beat us up pretty good when we sin. But I want to encourage your hearts this morning. This sorrow you feel when you sin and fail is not an evidence you don't belong to God, it is an evidence YOU DO. The fact that you care is grace. The fact that you grieve your sin is evidence of the work of God. And that guilt, grief, and shame is meant to cause our eyes to look to Christ, not ourselves. You cannot comfort yourself by looking at yourself (because you may not have any cause for comfort). It forces you to find comfort and relief only by gazing at the finished work of Jesus.

Author — “For every look at your sin, take ten looks at Christ.”

You see your sin, and you feel the guilt, look at the reality that Jesus has clothed you with his perfect righteousness (1). Look at his guilt-bearing death on the cross (2). Look at his burial of your sins and the removal of them from the sight of God (3). Look at the empty tomb where his dead body once laid, but now is raised in victory, the evidence of his victorious death (4). Look at his promise to be with us always, we are not alone (5). Look at his ascension to Heaven where he rules and reigns over all, our Lord is King (6). Look at his intercession for you to the Father, you have an eternal advocate (7). Look at his sending of the Holy Spirit, you have a Helper, you are kept, and you strengthened (8). Look at his promises and gift of His Word, no one can snatch you from His hands (9). Look at your future; Christ is coming again to make all things new (10). If you didn't notice, that was one look at your sin and guilt, and ten looks at Christ.

With unveiled face, behold Jesus. There is all of your righteousness. There is where all your guilt is taken. There is the One who took the wrath of God in your place and pardons your sins. You see, the fight against sin is not only to help you stay close, but even the lack of perfection in this life is meant to cause our dependence upon Him. Then from one degree of glory to the next we will become like the one we behold.

QUESTIONS:

1. Have you experienced becoming what you behold? If so, give an example.
2. What steps have you taken to get rid of some of the things that you are snacking on that's spoiling your appetite for Christ?
3. How does the fiery serpent set on a pole (Numbers 21:8) represent Christ on the cross (John 3:14-15)?
4. Where does gathering with the body rank in your weekly schedule? Considering how important this is, how can you make it more of a priority?
5. Discuss some ways to stir up one another in your Life Group.
6. Read Luke 18:9-14 and discuss which of the two postures you normally have.

7. What sin do you struggle with? Have you confessed that sin to God? Have you confessed it to others who can hold you accountable? Why or why not?
8. Why do we need the Spirit to help fight against our sin (Galatians 5:16-23)?
9. Are you in a Life Group? If not, fill out a connect card so we can get you connected.