

Ruin To Renovation - Sermon #22 - Up, Down, Back & Forth

Study Questions for Groups & Individuals

OPENING PRAYER:

Explain how the prayer time will go today:

1. Have someone open by inviting the Holy Spirit to speak to you as individuals & a group.
2. Then spend two minutes in silence allowing for the Holy Spirit to speak to each person.
 1. Realize he may say something for the group, our church, or another individual in the room.
3. After 2 minutes, begin praying aloud what you've heard.
 1. You might even just do it in a conversational format such as, "Joe, I felt the Holy Spirit telling me that he's pleased with the effort you've put into ministry lately, and will reward you greatly. Let me pray for that now..."
 2. You may get an image you can share and then pray through. Don't be afraid to share - the Holy Spirit is typically encouraging and speaks in ways which we don't expect.
4. After a while close it out and ask how people felt about what was prayed.

DISCUSSION & OPENER:

1. We said the local church, living under the kingdom reign of God, is a glimpse of heaven on earth, however imperfectly reflected. An example to society as to the health & vitality found & practiced under Christ's loving guidance in the individual, extending to community with others.
 1. Spend two minutes in meditative silence thinking on, and asking the Holy Spirit to give you a vision for a world which is totally under God's reign in all ways. One in which all people were walking in the light of Christ, and under his peace. What would that look like? What would go away which might dominate our current reality? What problems would cease to be?
2. Look at **Mt 11:28-30**, read it aloud, and note your thoughts.
 1. Are you weary & burdened? Do you need rest?
 2. In your opinion, is his yoke easy, and burden light? Why or why not?
3. What do 1 Corinthians 12:27 & Colossians 3:11 say about us, and the local church?
 1. **1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIV)**, *27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*
 2. **Colossians 3:11 (TPT)** says...*in this new creation life, your nationality makes no difference, or your ethnicity, education, or economic status—they matter nothing. For it is Christ that means everything as he lives in every one of us!*
4. We said *we're not spiritually formed alone - for us to be truly transformed, relationships must be transformed.*
 1. How does that feel to you? And what problems does it pose?
 2. Does that mean that we are all partly responsible for the good & bad things which happen in church life? Why or why not? And if so, how?
5. Thinking in this vein of shared communal transformation in Christ - read the following verses - what do they say, and mean to all of us in our spiritual formation together & our witness in society?
 1. **John 13:34-35**, *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

2. **1 John 3:16**, *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*
3. **1 John 3:14**, *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.*
4. **Matthew 5:44-48**, *But I tell you: Love your enemies & pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil & the good, and sends rain on the righteous & the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*
6. What difficulties do you have with these verses? How are they hard to live? What enables you to move forward in living them as best as you're able?
7. We said that two things which stand in the way of spiritual formation in our social context are: **ASSAULT & WITHDRAWAL**. They're defined below...
 1. Out of our wounded-ness we often **ASSAULT** others when we act against that which is good & godly for them, even when we have their consent in doing so.
 2. **WITHDRAWAL** is simply another form, where we intentionally disregard another's well-being & goodness, or are simply indifferent to them - we don't care.
8. Spiritual formations is a social thing. Talk about some of the ways we see assault & withdrawal in relationships & our world right now.
9. How does one's lack of commitment to walking more deeply with Jesus hold back others in community of growing more deeply in Jesus?
10. How do we apply what Jesus calls us to in the above verses to these things?
11. Although that is difficult to do, how is it actually the easiest way to live? What happens in relationships when we address issues in order not to assault or withdraw from others?
12. Spend some time in silent prayer asking yourself the following questions:
 1. **ASSAULT:** Have I been guilty of personal assault on others? Gossip? Angry divisive words? Injecting doubt into relationships? Am I upset, just because I've not gotten my way? Do I hound or nag? Do I force my agenda, think I'm right & want to win arguments?
 2. **WITHDRAWAL:** Am I withholding love? Giving the silent treatment? Have I given up? Have I disengaged myself from relationship with individuals, or the local church body? Am I being cliquish with my relationships in community? How've you let life's busyness, or hurt, make you withdraw from church life, family, neighbor & work relationships?
 3. How've you allowed assault & withdrawal to destroy peace?
 4. How can you allow Jesus to transform your social relationships overcoming & destroying the power of past wounds which have governed them so long?
13. As a group commit to memorizing 1 John 2:6, and check up at the next meeting together if you've made progress.