

Series: Journey Deeper	Reference: Mt 4:1-4, Eph 2:4-10 & various other passages	Title: Being Formed	Date: 09.22.2019
Website Writeup: Practicing the Presence of Christ leads to our Spiritual Formation as we are simultaneously being called to mission for His glory! Today we focus on how our Doing should flow from our Being as we are formed into the likeness of Christ.			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

This series follows along certain chapters of M. Robert Mulholland Jr.'s book, *Invitation to a Journey; A Roadmap for Spiritual Formation*. Much of these sermons will be reminiscent of, or sometimes direct quotes of his writings. I urge you to read along as we study this together.

For the maturing Christian, spiritual formation is the process of being formed into the likeness of Christ. We endeavor to become people of compassion, forgiveness & care. Living out of Grace, offering the message of Jesus to the world through love & service.

We desire to be distinctive people, like Peter & John in Acts 4:13, who by all other estimation were ordinary men, yet what made them extraordinary was that they'd been in the presence of Jesus (*¹³ When they saw the courage of Peter & John & realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished & they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*)

His presence transforms, as outlined in Romans 12:1-2, becoming a people who no longer conform to the patterns of this world, but are transformed by the renewing of our minds (*Therefore, I urge you, brothers & sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy & pleasing to God - this is your true & proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test & approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.*)

As transformation occurs, the heart of Christ drives us to make disciples of all peoples, baptizing them into the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit & teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded as seen in the Great Commission in Mt 28:18-20 (*¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*)

We practice the *presence* of God, leading to *spiritual formation*, simultaneously being called to *mission*. I hope we see - the spiritual life is going someplace - an invitation to journey deeper & go out to others, since it's not about us, it's about God's Glory through God's Mission. Our language for this at Six:Eight has been *To Follow Jesus, To live as Jesus Did, and To Manifest Jesus* on the Eastern Main Line & beyond.

We've spoken a great deal in past sermons of our Great Commission calling. And it's intuitive, the presence of Jesus is our life source. So, let's focus now on the middle term - *being formed*. And to begin, let me ask, what happens if someone interrupts your daily routine? How do you react?

Whether we admit it or not, we like to be in control. We all have our circle of control we draw around ourselves - within that circle are all the things of life of which we like to have a handle on. Some draw the circle closer, some farther out. The more power & influence you have in the world the farther out you're able to draw your circle.

Think about Meryl Streep & Anne Hathaway in *The Devil Wears Prada*. Streeps character had a very wide circle, she was a woman of great power in the fashion world. Hathaways characters circle was small as Streeps personal assistant - she almost didn't have her own life, to the point of being told how to dress. And when Streeps characters routine was interrupted, there was hell to pay for Hathaway.

Spiritual formation is the process of letting Jesus break your circle & take over your life. We use words like faith & trust to describe this process, but they're words easier to voice than to practice.

Spiritual formation would be more palatable if Scripture said we '*form ourselves*' into the likeness of Christ. But it doesn't, and we don't, which is why many don't engage deeply in it, since it means giving up control. In Christian terms, it means allowing Jesus to be Lord of my life, down to the thoughts I entertain. To those who like their control it doesn't give immediate gratification. It seems too slow, too ethereal, not valuable, in that it doesn't get me what I want right now! Spiritual formation is a slow bake.

For us mortals, it's always easier to DO than to BE. Scripture teaches the way of the Christian life is to *be formed*; the path of submission, making ourselves available to the Spirit of God, and the transformative power of His word. There is effort to be made here on our part, but the earning of purpose, meaning & value & transformative power of our hearts are in Divine hands, not ours - purpose, meaning & value are ascribed to us, and transformation is performed in us by God. It's He who forms my heart, He's the Great Surgeon, and I simply must lay myself down on the operating table.

We're born into a culture which views the world as an object to be controlled to our own purposes. Especially rugged Americans with our individualistic worldview. We're a self-made people in a self-made land - we tamed it, we shaped it, we control it. Allowing ourselves to be spiritually formed by Jesus flies in the face of such acculturation. Manipulators don't take kindly to outside manipulation. We grasp at information in order to take more control of the world around us - it's said, 'Information is power'. We tend to view control of our environment, current station & future as essential to giving us meaning, value & purpose. We reverse the order & live as though *doing* determines *being*.

Jesus' 1st temptation in Matthew 4:1-4 struck right at these issues of meaning, value & purpose. It was a temptation towards DOING to validate BEING, to reverse the divine order - *Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.* ²*After fasting forty days & forty nights, he was hungry.* ³*The tempter came to him & said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."* ⁴*Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

You can almost hear the demand - "Do this thing, and it will validate who & what you are." Or, "If you are who you really say, do this to authenticate yourself." But we must look back at the end of chapter 3 just before this temptation to Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan River. It says (vv16-17), ¹⁶*As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove & alighting on him.* ¹⁷*And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

The temptations Jesus faced, as well as ours, attach themselves to the very call & empowerment of God which define our meaning, value, & purpose. The presence of the Spirit at His baptism can be seen as Jesus' empowerment in His calling to ministry as the Messiah.

He was already *Being* who He was, and empowered by the Spirit to be so, there was no need for validation from anyone who demanded it, Satan or otherwise. He had nothing to prove. It was, and all temptation is, to reverse the roles of being & doing. **The temptation is to DO in order to BE valid, instead of our doing being birthed from our being - that we're valued, and have purpose & meaning in Christ due to God's grace already. Humanity evaluates meaning, value & purpose out of what we do, and how effective we are at it, and not the simple truth of who we are in Christ.**

Let's say you're a surgeon. The American Surgical Association has a big gala dinner, spouses invited. You show up with your hubby, a high school janitor. You sit down to dinner with all the other surgeons. Within moments your husband is asked, "What do you DO?" And when it's revealed, there's an, "Oh...well, that must be interesting." The conversation may last 5 minutes, and quickly your husband retires to the porch of the country club to grab a smoke alone, given no one really knows what to say to him - his doing puts him into a category.

His real being, or his meaning, value & purpose don't really come into the conversation. It's not necessarily that people are trying to belittle, they simply don't have any other way of categorizing people - it's a natural class-based system of thought. He's got to do something 'greater' to participate in the conversation, or they just don't know what to do with him. If he were a university professor of psychiatry, or physics, although not their field, he could more stand up to the scrutiny of their perceived judgment & the conversation may go on for an hour. But if he were a professor of New Testament Theology, the conversation may only last 15 minutes, 10 more than the janitors. We evaluate by what someone does & these days, people don't value janitors & New

Testament theology professors, or pastors - we just simply don't have the street-cred because what we DO doesn't seem to have much value in today's world.

Suicide rates are high among adolescents. Even higher among the elderly. Maybe this is the reason. We evaluate worth by what someone does. An adolescent is still wondering what they are going to do in life. Tanner's psychology professor said, "The average kid has the stress level of a 1950's psych-ward patient, and they have none of their boxes checked off like adults do." Meaning I have a house, a wife, a job, kids, a cat, I have my identity set (just look at my business card) - they don't.

Ironically we ask kids the question, "What do you want to BE when you grow up." But it would be more honest to ask, "What are you going to DO?" No wonder they feel lost, we've said to them, DOING determines BEING. As a result we have wealthy actresses paying off colleges to get their kids in - since identity is all wrapped up in education, career & success. Then when you retire with a gold watch & a plaque, you sit around after finding all your value & worth in what you did for the past 50 years...gone. Suddenly you're just BEING without knowing who, or what you ARE - you feel valueless, purposeless & meaningless.

In the spiritual formation of a soul towards Jesus, DOING flows out of BEING, not the other way around. It's God's work in us which forms us spiritually into the likeness of Christ. As God's own children, our being is set. As it says in Ephesians 2:4-10, *4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ & seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Notice, the BEING is God's work. We're made alive in Jesus. Raised up & seated with Him in the heavenly realms. By his grace we're saved through faith (submission) - a GIFT of GOD! Unearned. And only then does v10 express our DOING which flows out of this state of BEING in Christ! Good works flow out of who we are in Jesus.

We have nothing to prove to anyone, including God. He's put His stamp of gracious ownership on us when he went to the cross for us. It's not that He 'saved' us & now we have to work to continue in His good graces. No, He grafted us into the family tree. We have full rights as sons; we're children & heirs to the promise. God's own through & through, without fail. And out of gratitude & joy we want to grow more deeply into his likeness, doing the things to which He calls us.

We can only make ourselves available - to turn from sin to Jesus, to submit ourselves to His formative hand upon our soul. **This was inherent in Jesus response to Satan during that temptation, "People do not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds**

from the mouth of God.” (Mt 4:4) In other words, my pursuit of my daily needs (food, shelter, career, etc.), and how well I do that is not my source of purpose, meaning, or value. Rather my relationship with God is my source of being, and I willingly submit myself to the tutelage & transformative power of His revealed Word. Placing myself under it in trust & faith that He has my best interest in mind, and will shape my life to be the most honoring wonderful thing it was meant to be in Christ.

This BEING makes a difference in how you pursue career, where you live & what you do with time, talent & treasure. It bleeds out into every aspect of your being. Because of who you are in Christ, you have nothing to prove, and as my heart is conformed to Jesus, I begin to be about the things of Jesus instead of the things of Jason. It overflows into my calling of making disciples of others. Now I don't just pursue friends who make me happy, or reinforce my desires, personal goals & pat me on the back for a job well done; I see everyone as fertile ground for the Gospel. I make disciples, out of which real friendships come.

This flies in the face of our conditioning - the patterns of this world as Romans 12:1-2 puts it. When doing is placed before being, we need instant return on investment. We need to see that *what we've done* is perceived to be valuable to others, in order that we *feel* valuable. In extreme cases we call this insecurity, but even those who seem very confident can live out of this, they've just had more success to feed the internal monster. Take away success, and the monster starves. It's not necessarily positive affirmation which we crave, there are some of us who even thrive on being hated, given even the negative reaction makes us feel like we've done something. Ignore the narcissist & he dies. Yell at him, or stroke his ego, and he puffs up.

It's all reliant on people & how they react to us & they usually never react how we want, since they're not equipped to give us purpose, value & meaning. It's like two leaches gorging on each other - you're never filled. If we don't get the strokes we desire, we have a sense of failure & a loss of self-image. How much do you worry about what people think? Do you feel responsible for their feelings? Do relationships give you anxiety? Do you enjoy getting a rise out of people? Do you have an overwhelming need for approval, or attention? Do you do things out of spite? Are you passive/aggressive? You may be living out of deadening self-gratification & not out of your identity in Jesus.

Because the person who's settled in BEING in Christ, of gaining their worth from the sheer fact that God says they're worthy, not by what they do, but by the fact that He's claimed them as His child...this person is joyously detached from the need of accolades. They're patient when things don't go their way. Calm in the midst of relational storms. They have nothing to prove. Jack Miller calls this living under the mantle of *Sonship*, and not as a spiritual orphan any longer. They can be obedient to God even when it seems like obedience doesn't have an immediate payoff. Being formed fights against the need for instant gratification like Jesus' modeled in His temptation.

Those living under the need for self-gratification need results right away. Those being formed in Christ exhibit a patience, or an open-ended yielded nature even when things don't seem to make sense, or don't go their way.

In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:21, Jesus seems to contradict everything I just said, when He claimed...²¹ *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who DOES the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

"Jason, go back to the drawing board, your sermon stinks!" But I'd argue, Jesus is reinforcing this notion, even though it would seem He's putting all the emphasis on what we DO. Since his following statement in vv22-23 say this...²² *Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name & in your name drive out demons & in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*

What's He mean? He didn't contradict them - he didn't say - "NO, you didn't do those things!" They did. It means there are those who can look very spiritual, doing all the right things, but not out of BEING in the presence of Jesus! They do religious things, but without relationship to Him. Jesus isn't saying those things are bad, those things are most certainly good things.

He's saying DOING the work of Jesus without Jesus, isn't good enough. Hence we come full circle to our first & last point of our being - that we practice the presence of Jesus (Acts 4:13) who spiritually forms us (Romans 12:1-2), leading to the work of our calling (Matthew 28:18-20). He's pointing out the interrelationship of our Being & Doing, but they had it backwards. Doing must flow out of Being, not the other way around.

It's Romans 15:13, ¹³ *May the God of hope fill you with all joy & peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.* Doing is overflow, or outflow, of being in the presence of Jesus - a person in relationship to Jesus as not just Savior, but Lord.

In conclusion...Spiritual formation isn't something we do to ourselves, or in ourselves, and it's not necessarily seen in the amount of activity in our lives - even the noble things of life. It's something God does in us, and then through us into the lives of others. God isn't something to be grasped hold of, understood & manipulated in our desire to control or look good. He's a person, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, whom we're in relationship with, one we yield ourselves too, and He takes us deeper in our journey of faith. We simply need to say YES, and submit ourselves to Him.

There are ways of putting ourselves on that operating table of the Spirit. One is to simply memorize Scripture. Last series we memorized Mt 28:18-20. Now I'd love for you to memorize Romans 12:1-2 & Ephesian 2:8-10. Secondly, I've asked some of the Spiritual Mentors to do a simple spiritual formation lesson highlighting one practice each week of their choice after each sermon... Jen will share with us today.