

Midweek Message

“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”

(Jeremiah 29:13 ESV)

How's your passion for God? Have you ever looked deep into the heart of your soul and asked yourself that very question? Let's be honest with ourselves. Life can often get in the way of our passion to know and love the Lord. That's especially true as we continue to navigate through this pandemic in which we currently find ourselves. There's so much to think about. There's so much over which to be concerned. There's so much uncertainty and our medical experts really aren't much help as they also are trying to understand what's going on with this virus that so easily infects us and has already taken so many lives. However, it's in the midst of such a times as this that we, as God's beloved people, should even more so run to Him who alone is our help and our refuge. This past Sunday I briefly spoke about keeping our passion for God alive and what I'd like to do in this message is just add a few more thoughts about what this passion would look like.

So **first** of all, we must ignite our passion for God Himself. It's always been of great interest to me as I read through the Psalms how often this theme occurs from the writers. *“As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God”* (Psalm 42:1,2 ESV). What about us? Do we have that passion to know God and that craving to be in a vibrant and loving relationship with Him. Sadly, if we're not careful, we might find ourselves longing more for the grace of God than we do for the God of grace. We might find ourselves craving the blessings and benefits of being God's people more than actually craving to be in the presence of our God. I was reminded of something the Apostle Paul wrote which has been on the forefront of mind lately when he said,

“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:8-11 ESV).

You see, nothing was more important to him than in personally knowing Jesus and experiencing that relationship in an intimate way. The truth is, that should also be true of each and every believer in Jesus. Personally knowing the Lord should override every other aspect of our lives. It's not something that just happens in and of itself but is something we have to choose to do.

Secondly, we must inform our minds through the Scriptures. If we're truly seeking to know God, then the only way we'll be able to satisfy our longing for the Lord is if we go to that place in which we encounter Him. The Apostle Peter makes this very clear when he writes, *“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good”* (1 Peter 2:2,3 ESV). I love the word picture Peter uses in this text of a baby and how every infant has this craving for physical nourishment. You don't have to teach a baby how to drink its milk as it's something that comes naturally. In all honesty, the same should be true of us regarding the pure spiritual milk of the Word of God. God has given us His Word so that we might know Him, who He is and what He's like as well as what He requires of us as His beloved people. As Peter points out, if we're truly redeemed, genuinely trusting in Jesus, then within us there should be a super-natural craving to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. God has given us His love letter, if you will, so

that we can move on toward growing closer to Him, finding in Him all that will satisfy the hungering and thirsting of our souls. The Psalmist tells us,

“The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward” (Psalm 19:7-11 ESV).

Thirdly, we must invigorate our prayer times with God. I'll be honest with you as this is an area in which we all struggle. I'll also say that I just don't fully understand why the God of the universe waits for us to come to Him in prayer before He acts on whatever it is we're bringing before Him, but He does. The Apostle Paul tells us, *“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer”* (Romans 12:12 ESV). To be constant in prayer expresses the idea of setting aside actual times in which we come before the very presence of the Lord. In other words, even when it seems as if nothing is being done, we keep at it, knowing that God hears us and will answer us, in His time and in His way. Jesus made this very clear when He said,

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him” (Matthew 7:7-11 ESV)!

You see, God will come to our aid when we come to Him, seeking His glory in what we're asking. We may have to persist for a while, but God's timing and grace are always perfect.

Fourth, we must instigate our personal pursuit of holiness. The Psalmist tells us, *“Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully”* Psalm 24:3,4 ESV). I don't know if I can think of anything more important regarding our passion for God than that of personal purity. Sin will dampen our craving to know and love God. That's why the writer to the Hebrews tells us, *“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord”* (Hebrews 12:14 ESV). Sin is so serious that God incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ, had to suffer and die a horrible death on the cross in order to redeem us. Through His sacrifice on the cross, God has now reconciled believers to Himself, placing us in a position of holiness as we're clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. However, even though we're in this position of holiness, we must work on our practice of holiness as the Apostle Peter tells us, *“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’”* (1 Peter 1:14-16 ESV).

There's so much more we could talk about regarding our passion for God such as worship, the sacrament of the Lord's supper, the singing of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual songs, acts of service and ministry to others, and so much more, all of which work to foster a genuine passion for the Lord. However, it all boils down to one simple truth: Are we truly pursuing God, seeking Him with all our heart, because only in doing so will we find Him.

Pastor Mark