

**WHAT I WANT YOU TO KNOW
(PASTOR JOHN'S FAREWELL SERMON)**

Opening Thought:

- Every time I preach, I get a little nervous.
- Teaching is a grave responsibility that carries with it a higher accountability before the Lord.

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1)

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matthew 18:6)

I. What I want you to know about what shaped my preaching

- It was the James 3 passage that awakened me to the need to grow up.
- But it was the Acts 20 passage that provided for me a plan and a purpose for my preaching and ministry.

A. Acts 20:17-18 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews... Paul declared...

1. I lived among you completely committed to my calling.

- What is this calling to which I was called?
 - The first thing I did was revisit my ordination vows. (Acts 20 was their grounding!)
- Next, Paul said he served the Lord with humility, tears, and trials.
 - Who did Satan use in these moments as the agent of trials and tears?
 - Paul even laid this bare: fellow Jewish believers.
 - Is this causation of ministry misery new? No. David said this, **“For it is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together; within God’s house we walked in the throng.”** (Psalm 55:12-14)
 - Anyone who has been in the church for any length of time can relate to this: I have never been hurt like I have been hurt by fellow believers.
- Therefore, this first declaration of Paul helped me know that tough moments were coming, and then it helped me to put them in proper perspective when the tears came and eventually dried from my face.

2. I did not shrink from teaching all you needed to hear, even when it was hard to hear and cost me personally.

Acts 20:20-21 & 27 “...how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ...Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God...”

- My focus, prior to this assessment was on pleasing the people who listened to me preach, better known as the fear of human beings.

Paul said three more things contained in this section of Acts:

- Paul said, “Everything I said was for public consumption because I fervently believed everything I said, and I did not fear the consequences.

- Paul said, “I always centered on the importance of salvation through repentance and the forgiveness of sins as a PURE GIFT. Finally...”
- Paul said, “You must let the Spirit guide your life.”

3. Paul said Generosity must be the hallmark of your life.

Acts 20: 33-35: **I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”**

- With these words, the Apostle Paul said to me through the Holy Spirit, generosity must not only be the example of your life, you must teach it to your people.
- Money is the most powerful god they will face in their lives. It will tear them and the congregation apart if they do not embrace this teaching.
- So Cathy and I not only practiced tithing, I taught it every year I was in the pulpit.

II. I WANT YOU TO KNOW AND EXPERIENCE IS A LIFE LIVED IN THE SPIRIT

A. Engage in Spiritual Warfare – Not Culture Wars!

Eph 6:12 **“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”**

- Why can’t we get this into our heads?
 - Instead of standing firm against the enemy, we rail at the world as if unbelievers as if they can help themselves.
- The only way to change the world is, **“Go therefore and make disciples, TEACHING THEM all I have commanded you.”**
 - My call to you to engage in spiritual warfare is a call to clear the path for evangelism. What is more, it is a call to go after the spiritual forces that are making your life a living hell!!
 - This is not a strange thing or even a new thing in which I am asking you to engage.

Isaiah 59:14-21

Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him.

- Isaiah is prophesying the coming of Ephesians 6. The phrase, “no one to intercede,” is a cry that there is no one to engage in spiritual warfare. Intercession is spiritual warfare!
- So the Lord Himself is going to go to war...spiritual war!

He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment. So they shall fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the LORD drives.

- This is the Lord Who is going to do this so that His name is known and feared. But it will not always be this way.
- Isaiah prophesies there is coming a time when His Spirit will not just be a temporary mantel on you, but will be a permanent resident inside you!

“And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares the LORD. “And as for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD: “My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,” says the LORD, from this time forth and forevermore.”

- Father God’s Spirit is going to become a permanent, forever presence so you can engage along with the Lord in Spiritual warfare.
- Spiritual warfare is not a strange thing or just a temporary thing, it is our calling until the Lord returns! You must learn to engage in it if you are to be effective in this world where truth is disappearing at an astonishing rate.
- Intercession is spiritual warfare, and spiritual warfare is prayer. IOW’s you are being called to be a people of deep and committed prayer.

B. Stay grounded in the Word – it will not only help you stay centered and anchored in the peace of the Lord, it will guide you into understanding that there is a reason why things are as they are.

- The Word is your lifeline in this world.
 - There is a greater unease in the world than we have seen in our lifetimes. Things seem to be getting worse. People ask why God is not interceding. The answer is, God is interceding, the Holy Spirit clearly told us in the Scriptures that things will get worse the closer we get to the return of Jesus.
- If you do not ground yourself in the Word:
 - You will succumb to the pressures and influences of the world.
 - You will let your feelings guide you into compromising on the truth. When the mainline churches walked away from the ordination vow I took over 30 years ago that proclaimed, “the Word of God is the source and norm of life,” they broke fellowship with me and Pastor Marty, and many others who were unwilling to turn away from their vows.
- STAY GROUNDED IN THE WORD!

C. Become a Super-Spreader!

- Super-Spreader is now a part of our vocabulary from the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Church gatherings where singing in prolific, was a prime means of spreading the virus from the spray that comes from singing.
 - It is interesting, isn’t it, that just opening our mouths causes a super-spreader event
- Why Super-spreaders are needed, or why we must share Christ with a sense of immediacy.
 - **Matthew 25:** the Parable of the Virgin Maidens
 - Two Critical Lessons
 1. **It is not enough to just know of Jesus:** there are 1000’s of people sitting in pews all over this country who ONLY know OF Jesus. You can add to that, 100,000’s outside the church who think the same thing.
 2. **You cannot get into Heaven on someone else’s oil!**
When Jesus comes, your oil lamb of faith needs be filled with the oil you have obtained from the Holy Spirit, and the only way to have endless oil is to keep developing your relationship with the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Closing Thought

To be filled and used by the Holy Spirit:

Step out in faith.

Believe that what you read in the Scriptures is true.

Know in your heart that the Holy Spirit loves you and will work through you.

JUST BE OPEN!

When I Survey the Wonderful Cross

Isaac Watts

1. When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.
3. See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.