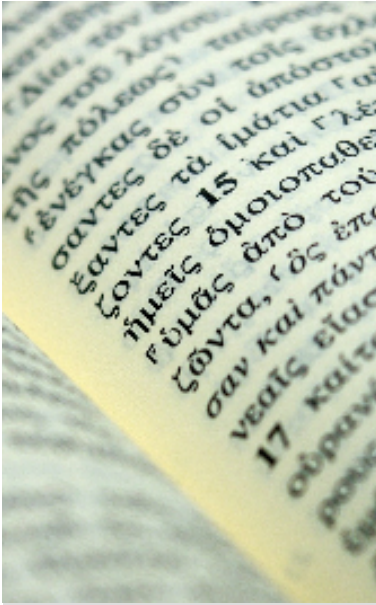


YEAR IN REVIEW - 2009

SCRIPTURE TEXT: PSALM 119:9-16 (ESV)



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December 27, 2009

Oak Hills Presbyterian Church,
Overland Park, Kansas

WHY REVIEW

As one charged with preaching the full counsel to God's Word, I have spent a fair amount of time thinking about, praying over and mapping out next year's sermons. My prayer is that our interaction with God's Word each week would amount to more than a bunch of unrelated messages, but rather would have a **cumulative** effect on us as a congregation. But before we enter into a new year in the pulpit, I want to take time here on this last Sunday of the year

to review where God has taken us in 2009. Before I do, let me highlight a few reasons for this annual "Year in Review" sermon.

- 1. SCRIPTURE IS CUMULATIVE.** The Bible isn't a bunch of separate ideas. It is one story detailing God's relationship to man and the reconciliation to Him we find in Christ alone. We should be asking "How does one text relate to rest of God's Word?"
- 2. THE HEARING AND STUDY OF SCRIPTURE WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO BE A CORPORATE ENDEAVOR.** Most every book in the Bible was written to be read, studied and applied by God's people **corporately** (Paul wrote to churches, Moses to all Israel, etc.)
- 3. STEPPING BACK TO SEE GROWTH IN GOD'S WORD EDIFIES THE CHURCH.** We're not in the same place we were a year ago, and the fuel that has moved us has been God's Word. It is encouraging to see God working in our midst in this way.
- 4. THE CUMULATIVE MEANING OF SCRIPTURE MEANS TO CHANGE US.** More than informational, Scripture is **transformational**. The time we invest studying His word reveals not only what occurred long ago, but also who we are to be now as a result.

Once again, we draw our text for this "Year in Review" message from Psalm 119, the longest chapter of Scripture (176 verses). It is an acrostic poem of 22 stanzas, each correlating with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the original Hebrew, each line of each stanza begins with that stanza's corresponding letter. It is a beautiful work of art, a marvel of ancient poetry.

For these sermons, we're working our way through this Psalm one stanza per year. Last year we began with the first stanza—aleph. This year we move to the second—beth. Approaching this Psalm in this way seems to fit. The theme of this Psalm is the celebration of the reality that God has given His Law to His people and has not withheld it, honoring the fact that God tells us what He wants from us rather than leaving us guessing. And it delights in how perfect His guidance is. Let's read stanza two.

PSALM 119:9-16

- ⁹How can a young man keep his way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.
- ¹⁰With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your commandments!
- ¹¹I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.
- ¹²Blessed are you, O LORD;
teach me your statutes!
- ¹³With my lips I declare
all the rules of your mouth.
- ¹⁴In the way of your testimonies I delight
as much as in all riches.
- ¹⁵I will meditate on your precepts
and fix my eyes on your ways.
- ¹⁶I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

LET ME NOT WANDER

In a recent sermon on the topic of church membership, we read the author of Hebrews urging believers to "consider how we might stir one another on toward love and good works." (Heb 10:24-25) We talked about that word "consider." What does it mean? It means we are to think, ponder and seek to untangle and unwrap ideas for how to apply Biblical truths to our daily lives.

A big part of considering how to love and live well is thinking through those areas where we know we are prone to wander from the truth. The Psalmist prays, "Let me not wander from your commandments." This writer has considered and has concluded it is a daily struggle for a young man to keep his way pure. How might he do that? He considers again, by hiding the Word of God in it. We must be anchored in God's immutable truth. It is so easy to get off mission. We need to be anchored in ultimate truth and purpose. Christ is our anchor. Knowing and enjoying Him and proclaiming His gospel to others is our mission.

A theme of this stanza in response to the need for an anchor is the author's delight in having one. This Psalm does more than simply inform us of God's statutes. The Psalmist rejoices in them. Expressions of joy drip from these verses. (ex: Vs. 14, 16) Notice this Psalm is not a sermon. It is a prayer. The Psalmist is asking God to help him internalize Scripture. (9-11) Why? Because the writer knows his actions flow from the content of his heart and he wants his heart to be filled with the truth of Scripture, or as Derek Kidner said, "the mind which stores up scripture has its taste and judgment educated by God." (Tyndale OT Commentaries, Vol. 14b, Pg. 424, 1973)

As we thread together the themes of this past year's sermons, consider this past year. Interrogate your heart. Are your tastes and judgments more educated by God and His Word this year than last? Consider the purity of the path you've walked, and also its impurity. What leads you into temptation? What defeats you every time? Consider why that might be. Then consider what we have gained together from this year in the word of God. Ask God for the grace and strength to hide truth in your heart. From each of this year's sermon series, I'll extract themes and then we will consider how to draw them together.

NO ONE TOOK HIS LIFE

We began 2009 tracing our way through the last days of Jesus' earthly ministry, unpacking His statement, "No one takes my life from me. I lay it down of my own accord. I alone have the authority to lay it down and to take it up again." (Jn 10:18) Christianity is more than inspirational. The story of Christ, our Incarnate Lord, is a graphic tale of treachery, injustice and death giving way to the most glorious hope of eternal life the world has ever known. In that series we asked if at any point Jesus became a victim caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. What we saw was He never lost His composure and was never caught off guard. Instead, He methodically prepared His captors to arrest Him and His disciples to know what to do once that occurred.

THEME 1: JESUS' DEATH & RESURRECTION WAS TO TAKE THE SINS OF THOSE WHO WOULD BELIEVE IN HIM UPON HIMSELF, DYING IN THEIR PLACE AS THE PERFECT SPOTLESS LAMB OF GOD, RISING AGAIN GIVING THEM VICTORY OVER THE GRAVE.

No one took His life from Him, but He did lay it down. It is hard to imagine ever being able to say anything too strongly about the central importance of Christ's work on the cross. Nothing under all creation remains unaffected by this incredible sacrifice of love, the actual giving of one life for another, this atoning act whereby Christ restores those who would believe in Him to the unblemished, face to face relationship with God we were meant to know and enjoy since the time of creation and before.

THEME 2: THE RISEN CHRIST HAS GIVEN EVERY ONE OF HIS FOLLOWERS THE CALL TO BEAR WITNESS TO HIM.

After He'd risen from the grave and before He ascended into Heaven, Jesus gave His followers a Great Commission to go make disciples of all the nations, leaving His church with an active call to follow Him with all we have and are, giving our lives to the work of proclaiming the risen Christ. The call to follow Jesus is headed someplace. The love between Christ and His people has an enduring destination in glory. No war can destroy it. No failing among His people can break it. No darkness can subdue it. His love, so much bigger than ours, holds us up before Him with all our faults & bids us, "Follow Me."

LIFE TOGETHER—OUR MISSION

In light of Jesus' Great Commission, we spent the summer and into the fall focused on the make-up and mission of the church. For 6 weeks in our study of 2nd Timothy called "Life Together" we studied the paradox of Christian community. We're called to live together as One Body, yet we're all sinful and will probably offend or wound one another if we're together for a significant period of time. So we asked, "How can we live together in a way where the church is and stays healthy?" We focused on the call to pursue peace with each other, learning to look for the Gospel in all we do together, opposing what tears us down, contending for what builds us up. We named our foundation the Word of God and talked about how living in community is a privilege.

THEME 3: THE CALL TO COMMUNITY IS AT THE SAME TIME A CHALLENGE AND A PRIVILEGE, SO WE NEED TO EXTEND TO ONE ANOTHER THE SAME GRACE WE OURSELVES RELY ON.

Our hope is that Oak Hills would be an honoring reflection of our Lord Jesus Christ in how we love and live life together, always growing, always serving with the best we have, always studying His Word, always pursuing maturity and usefulness, always invested in Kingdom work, passionate to serve and glorify Christ our Lord and Head with all we have and are.

In the fall, we spent eight weeks working through Oak Hills' Mission Statement one clause at a time. We talked about our call to proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole person in our community and throughout the world, equipping individuals and families to learn to know and enjoy God, to respond to Him through authentic worship and godly living and to lead other to do the same, all by the grace of God and all for His glory.

By what power shall we carry out this mission, and for what reason? All we do as Christ's church on earth we do by the power of the grace of God at work within us. Grace yields in us a call to proclaim Christ—and to live this out is for God's glory and our joy. Grace is anything but nebulous. It is the story and the fruit of Christ's atoning work on the cross for those who would believe. Grace covers our sins and heals our wounds and binds us together in Christ in such a way that we can, as a local church, engage with Christ's Great Commission as One Body.

THEME 4: THIS LOCAL CHURCH, OAK HILLS, HAS A GLORIOUS MISSION TO KNOW AND MAKE KNOWN THE ASTONISHING GRACE OF GOD—THAT SAME GRACE WHICH ENABLES FLAWED PEOPLE TO LIVE IN LOVING, GOD-HONORING COMMUNITY.

BEHOLD THE LAMB

Over the recent several weeks, we saw in the Old Testament how God told His people to tell and retell to their children the story of how He saved them from slavery in Egypt. (Deut 6:20-25) In this command, we were reminded that while our redemption in Christ is set in doctrinal truth, it is anchored in an old, old story—an amazing and true tall tale. We explored that story, looking for the evidence and prophecies of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrated just a couple days ago.

THEME 5: HAVING BEGUN THE YEAR TALKING ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION BEING SOMETHING HE HIMSELF PURSUED, WE ENDED THE YEAR TALKING ABOUT HOW HIS COMING TO SAVE THE BROKEN AND TRIUMPH OVER EVIL WAS PURPOSED IN THE MIND AND WILL OF GOD FROM BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.

GIVE YOUR LIFE AWAY

So where does this leave us? The Psalmist prayed, "I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word." (Ps 119:16) What can we hide away in our hearts from this year's sermons? Here is the charge I pray we will receive from God's word this year, in order that we might delight in keeping His statutes.

With our bookends being the resurrection of Christ and the ancient prophecies foretelling us that this was to liberate us from the tyranny of sin and live in face to face relationship with our Maker, we must then honestly ask, "What is Christ to me?" because in Scripture, He is everything. He lives, risen victorious over the grave. He stands at the right hand of God interceding for His people. This was God's purpose before we were born.

Joining these themes, we see the life, death and resurrection of Christ are meant to define how we live. But we are prone to wander. Do our lives reflect the purpose Christ gave them? The anchoring power, supremacy and triumph of Christ ought to fill us with delight. Does it? Honestly? He ought to move us to unrelenting testimony of His astonishing grace. Is this where your eyes are fixed? Your life happens once and it is happening now. Don't waste it chasing comforts and uncomplicated lives. The life spent in the pursuit of fulfilling the Great Commission is richer by far. Give your life away for the Gospel because the Gospel is true. Oh Lord, let us not wander from your word!