The Weekly Word
June 4-10, 2012

This week we reach the end of Ezekiel which will allow us to spend some time in the New Testament. Thanks for reading along with me. Happy reading…

Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link… http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/.

Monday, June 4: Ezekiel 46 – Accommodating His people…

An interesting feature of this temple was the additional kitchens for the people described at the end of the chapter. Solomon's temple had the inner altar where the priest offered the daily and yearly sacrifices, but this temple has a place for the people to come and eat their offering before the Lord. Verses 22-24: *In the four corners of the outer court were enclosed courts, forty cubits long and thirty cubits wide; each of the courts in the four corners was the same size. Around the inside of each of the four courts was a ledge of stone, with places for fire built all around under the ledge. He said to me, "These are the kitchens where those who minister at the temple will cook the sacrifices of the people."* It seems to me that God was going the extra measure to provide space so His people could be with Him.

My heart latched on to that last line I wrote. God has done that most excellently with Jesus and the NT. No longer do we need a temple, no longer do we need intermediary priests. Jesus is now 'The Way, Truth and The Life' (John 14:6), and everyone who calls on Him will be saved (Acts 2:21 & Romans 10;13) and is ushered into a living relationship with God.

What a gift Jesus is W,hat a gift from God…

Lord God, thank You that You always seem to go the extra mile to connect with us. You designed these special kitchens for the sacrifices of the people in Ezekiel's vision. You sent Jesus, eliminating the sacrificial system of temple. You truly are the prodigal Father of the parable in Luke 15, the Father who runs to the son at the first sign of turning home.

Blessed be the name of the Lord who loves and saves… Alleluia! Amen.

Tuesday, June 5: Ezekiel 47 – The River of Life…

As I read about the river I immediately remembered another river in Revelation 22. The two visions are very similar.

Ezekiel 47:1,12: *The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. ... Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.*

Revelation 22:1-2: *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.*

The river waters life. The river waters the trees which constantly bear fruit and their leaves are for healing.

I saw in these visions how God's grace flows from His throne in never ending supply. God's grace feeds and nourishes. Water is essential for humans and to sustain that which we need. God is supplying it with abundance. And the trees God has planted along the river provide food and healing. The trees sustain and maintain life. Grace sustains and maintains life.

And so I pondered and meditated upon GRACE, the ever-present abundant-flow of grace, which comes from God.

What a wonderful morning immersing myself in the flow of God Grace…

Grace, grace, God's grace. Grace that is greater than all my sin.

Grace, grace God's grace. Grace that will pardon and forgive…

Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see…

Thank You for Your grace, Lord. Grace that flows freely and abundantly from Your hand. Grace that waters life, nourishes life and provides all I need. Grace that refreshes and bathes. Thank You for all Your grace and all it does… Thank You. Amen.

Wednesday, June 6: Ezekiel 48 – THE LORD IS THERE …

Four words… *THE LORD IS THERE* (35).

Those words grabbed me. My desire, my hope, my longing is that those words would describe my church, my family, my life. That others would see and say of me, my family, the church… *THE LORD IS THERE.*

Oh, my Heavenly Father, my Savior Jesus, my Comforter and Counselor, Holy Spirit, that I would surrender so totally to You that others would see and say, THE LORD IS THERE in that life.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that my family would surrender so totally to You that others would see and say THE LORD IS THERE in that family.

Holy Trinity, God Three yet One, that my entire church would surrender so totally to You that others would see and say, THE LORD IS THERE in that church.

Almighty God, that all who follow you would surrender so totally to You that others would see and say of Your people, wherever they gather, THE LORD IS THERE. Amen.

Thursday, June 7: James 1 – The joy of trials…

A little over a month ago, my church, which was in the midst of wrestling with a difficult issue, was at a critical juncture of decision. During that time, James 1:2-8 became particularly helpful for me. As I sought the Lord, I even used it one day as a prayer guide for our church as we gathered to pray about the important decision we had to make. James instructed the church:

> *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.*

Some things I pondered, then and again this morning, went like this…

Even thought I dislike trials and heartache, it is precisely those times that shape me and give me depth of character and the perseverance I need to lead a life that honors Jesus. Sadly, trials

can produce strength of character and bitterness in my character. Questions I needed to ask myself were about which was forming in me and I needed to pray that Christ-like character and perseverance were being formed in me.

I don't have all wisdom. I desperately need God's help and wisdom to sift through the options and come to the place God wants me to be. What a gift God offers to me when He offers wisdom. [I am not sure I understand it, but the line about giving wisdom *without finding fault…* intrigues me and demands considerable thought.]

Another element was 'not being double-minded' When I believe I have heard and received wisdom from God, I need to stand on that. Waffling is something I distain in politicians. Tell me what you believe, I can agree or disagree. Either way I will honor the person for his/her convictions, just don't be a spineless jellyfish who seems to believe what appears most prudent in the present moment. I hear echoes of this same sentiment in James' admonition to not be double-minded. And this convicts me because I know too well how I can and do waffle…

This morning these thoughts drive me to prayer…

Oh, God, form Your character in me. As I go through trials, please chip off my rough ungod-like characteristics and form in me, You character. Lord, please don't let the furnace of trials and temptations to harden me in ways that You do not like, but use the trials to teach me Your way, Your character, Your life… through Jesus, who endured more than I can imagine to save me, I pray. Amen.

Friday, June 8: James 2 – Don't show favoritism…

Ouch… three words exposed me. *Don't show favoritism* (1).

Reading those words, I was cut to the heart. In an instant I saw in myself all manner of favoritism. I make instant judgments about people, by their race, accent, clothes, education, appearance, smile or lack there of, and any number of other factors.

I don't want to but I do. Often times it just happens.

As I sit here confronted with my own favoritisms, I begin to ask myself how can I keep in check those instant judgments so that I don't act on them, so that I allow love to determine my actions not my instant impressions…

Then I thought if I can foster Christ's love rather than my instant reactions maybe over time Christ's love will overcome my natural tendency to make instant judgments based on superficial stuff . That way I will grow to see people with Jesus' eyes…

Oh, Lord, forgive me for the many pockets of favoritism that live within me. Even more, Lord, help me to gain victory over the very fleshly part of my old nature that still resides in me.

In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Saturday, June 9: James 3 – Taming the tongue…

Ugh, why today… the tongue?! Before my eyes even focused on God's Word, the section title pierced me, "Taming the tongue." As a person whose life is to speak, teach, pray, lead my words mound up. This chapter humbles me.

It beings with the first note, *Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly* (1). Talk about humbling!!! And it builds from there. *We all stumble in many ways.* (2a)… *no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be* (8-10).

I am undone.

My mind begins to weigh the difference between taming and harnessing. Prayer bursts forth from within me…

Oh, God, help me to harness my tongue, to place the bridle of Your Word on my life and the bit of truthfulness in my mouth that my words might not sin against You or lead myself and others astray.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, Oh Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer (Ps 19:14). Amen.

Sunday, June 10, 2012, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list… I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.