

SUNDAY

February 5,, 2012

READ: Revelation 3: 1-6

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: How is Jesus described in this passage (vs. 1)? How is Sardis known to Jesus? What does He command of the church? What does He threaten will happen if they don't heed his command? What is the good news in this passage (vs. 4)? What does He promise?

KEY CONCEPT: Sardis had a rich history that it took pride in. It was famed for its affluence. Gold and silver coinage had its origin there. The geography was easily defended, with Sardis situated 1500 feet above an alluvial plain. In olden days it was a citadel and place of refuge, the residence of king and courtier. It was a city whose name was almost synonymous with pretensions unjustified, promise unfulfilled, appearance without reality, confidence which heralded ruin. The Christian community was infected by the complacency of the culture.*

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: The description above brings to mind a city whose people are "resting on their laurels." In what ways can you imagine that this affected the lives of the Christians who lived there? As you consider the present day, can you see any parallels to this description? Is this an inevitable aspect of mankind...that we lay back upon the accomplishments of those generations who have gone before us? What affect does that have on the present generation?

PRAY: Consider this passage from the perspective of what God may be trying to say to the present day church. If you sense His dissatisfaction, pray in a way that confesses any part that your action or inaction may play in the overall picture...as well as to confess on behalf of the whole church in regard to that matter.

*Excerpted and adapted from the Glo Bible.

MONDAY

February 6, 2012

READ: Revelation 3:1-6 (Focus: verse 2)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What is implied about the church by the command that Jesus gives to it ("Wake up!")? What action does Jesus tell the church at Sardis to take after it wakes?

KEY CONCEPT: Faith, if it is not nourished on a regular basis, will atrophy & die out. (see John 15:5-8)

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Consider this command on two levels. First, from a personal perspective...what are you doing to keep your faith refreshed, vital, and active? In what ways are you experiencing God's presence in your life....transforming your mind and renewing your spirit? Do you feel fully AWAKE? Or is your faith a bit drowsy and declining in importance to you?

Secondly, how do you think McLane Church is doing in regard to this? Are we "resting on laurels" or prayerfully seeking God and pushing out to embrace His plan for our region?

PRAY: Today thank God for the "alarm clock" message that Jesus proclaims in verse 2. Consider how this message applies to your own life and our church, and pray accordingly.

TUESDAY

February 7, 2012

READ: Revelation 3:1-6 (Focus: verse 2)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What does Jesus say is incomplete in the sight of God?

KEY CONCEPT: When we are living fully behind the lead of Jesus, we become His body in our world...reaching out with the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). When we are not actively involved in His plan for reconciling the world to Him, we are not fulfilling His plan for us.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: The Key Concept above talks about the importance of reconciliation to God. How do you see our multi-site concept of ministry as helping to fulfill that command from 2 Corinthians? Does this excite you - that God is using our church to reach those who are unconnected to Him? Have you gotten involved in helping the multi-site effort in some fashion? Where do you think God might want McLane Church to plant the additional sites that He has given us the vision for? Two of our Core Values speak to this in particular: "willingness to be inconvenienced for the sake of the Gospel", and "every member as a minister". If you have not embraced these two values in your life, consider how you might do so in 2012.

PRAY: Spend some time in contemplative prayer today. Open with a time of praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is and what He has done. Next, ask Him to show you if He finds any incomplete deeds that He wants you to attend to. Don't rush on, but allow Him to speak into the silence. If He shows you something, thank Him and ask His help to bring it to completion in a way that pleases Him.

WEDNESDAY

February 8, 2012

READ: Revelation 3:1-6 (Focus: verse 3)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: In the first part of verse 3 Jesus encourages the church at Sardis to do what? What are the three parts of what he tells them in this verse?

KEY CONCEPT: Remembrance is a key aspect of our faith. God wants us to remember what He has saved us from, and what we are saved to. Without remembrance of who Jesus is, and what He has done, our human nature will draw us further and further away from God.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Time and again in the Old Testament we see the Israelites being rescued by God, thereafter living close to Him for awhile, and then slipping back into their idolatrous ways that bring God's condemnation. What specifically do you think Jesus is referring to when he speaks of remembrance, obedience, and repentance in verse 3?

What did Jesus give to us as a means of helping us to remember Him (see Luke 22:7-20)? What impact or effect does this sacrament have upon your own relationship with Jesus? How do you think your faith would be affected if you were not encouraged to remember what Jesus has done for you on a regular basis?

PRAY: We are a forgetful people. We tend to always be looking forward, forgetting what is behind (even Paul said these words). There is danger in not remembering our past. Today, thank God for what Jesus has already done for us, and pray that He will help you to live your life in thanksgiving for this amazing act of love. Part of that thanksgiving is to obey what God asks of you. Keep alert to see what that might be...

THURSDAY

February 9, 2012

READ: Revelation 3:1-6 (Focus: verse 3b)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: In the second half of verse 3, Jesus warns of the consequences of not obeying His command. What does he say? What do you think this means?

KEY CONCEPT: As children of God, we are subject to His loving authority in our lives. We are given freedom of choice...as were Adam and Eve....and like them we are subject to the consequences of our choices.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: The Bible has several examples of choices that the people were free to make...each with warnings and promises of what the consequences would be. Read Deuteronomy 30:11-20. Observe Moses explaining to the Israelites what God had told him about the choice they needed to make.

When you are at a crossroads...clearly needing to make a choice that would either honor or dishonor God in some way, how do you decide? Do you simply look at the short-term gain that the dishonoring path will get you? Or do you count the possible cost of the consequences that this choice will result in? What are those costs (not necessarily financial ones) that a dishonoring choice may bring upon you and others?

PRAY: Today ask God to help you have a heart that is passionate in desiring to please the One who has created you and who has died for you. Ask Him for wisdom when you have difficult decisions to make.

FRIDAY

February 10, 2012

READ: Revelation 3:1-6 (Focus: verse 4)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: In verse 4, what silver lining in Sardis does Jesus refer to?

KEY CONCEPT: No matter how dark and seemingly hopeless things are in a culture, there is usually a remnant of faithful people who continue to honor God with their lives.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Read Elijah's lament to God (1 Kings 19:10) about how he sees things in Israel at that time. Now read God's reply (1 Kings 19:18).

How do these biblical examples compare to what you see happening around you in our culture and in the world today? Does the concept of a remnant of faithful people give you hope that God can use small things to bring great things to pass?

How can we as a church, and you as an individual continue to be salt and light in a dark world...bringing God's truth and love?

PRAY: In today's reading we see Jesus' promise that those who remain faithful to Him will be commended and will walk with Him in eternity. Ask God to help you remain as one of those in Sardis who resisted the culture and remained true to Him to the end.

SATURDAY

February 11, 2012

READ: Revelation 3:1-6 (Focus: verses 4-5)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What two groups of people are being compared in these two verses? What will be the difference in the outcome for them?

KEY CONCEPT: Repentance is the key to a second chance at God's favor.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: How do you think verse 5 affected the people in the church at Sardis who had fallen away from honoring God with their lives? Do you think God's mercy helped people turn back to Him rather than continuing on the path they had been on? If you could have a second chance at some of the decisions you've made in life, what would you choose for a "do-over"?

God offers us that same hope...that we can be forgiven our sin...if we will confess it to Him and change our ways (repent). Have you experienced this amazing "do-over" from God? In what ways has it changed your life from before?

PRAY: Thank God today for being a god of second chances. Thank Him specifically for how His grace has blessed you. If you need a "do-over" with your life, tell God about it, and ask Him to come into your life (1 John 1:9).

