



Series: Seeds

Sermon: Growing Up

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

Monday: Read Psalm 65

Psalm 65 paints a beautiful portrait of God's work in our lives. God is the one who answers prayer (v. 2) and forgives transgressions even when they are overwhelming (v.3). To live in God's presence is to experience blessedness and goodness (v. 4). God is the God of salvation and deliverance (v. 5). God is the "hope of all the ends of the earth" (v. 5). One of the images that strikes me most is in v.11: "your wagon tracks overflow with richness." the point is that where God goes, richness abounds. God's presence is life and abundance. And because of God's work to bring richness to life even the pastures, hills, meadows, and valleys clothe themselves with appropriate bounty, and they all "shout and sing together for joy." In what ways has God's presence brought richness to your life? Can you imagine yourself clothed in God's bounty? Give thanks to God today for the ways God's goodness has grown in your life.

Prayer: I shout and sing today for joy! For you, O God, have blessed my life. Amen.

Tuesday: Read 2 Corinthians 9: 6-15

Disciples missionary Mark Behle writes: "In the Lesotho Church at Masitise, the Sunday morning service typically takes 1.5-2 hours. The length of the service is not due to a long-winded preacher but to the receiving the offering which takes anywhere from 30-45 minutes. We receive offering by groups. Everyone belongs to a group based on the area around the church where you live. When your group is called, someone will spontaneously start singing a joyful chorus and people stand up, clap their hands, sing and even dance a bit. All this takes place while the members of the group process down the aisle to put their money on the offering table. It is a truly joyful time of celebration! The singing continues while they count the money and then announce the total for that group! And then the next group is called. With over 15 groups you can see why it takes a bit of time to do the offering but it seems to be the part of the service that the people enjoy most. When I experience this celebration of giving in Lesotho, it is hard not to contrast it with the way most of the churches in North America receive the offering: a quiet, somber affair with soft organ music playing in the background. By any standard Lesotho is certainly not a rich country. Despite the fact most people there are not wealthy they still know that they have enough to share! And the people have tremendous joy in giving. Given the huge abundance of wealth we in North America have, one would think we would be the ones doing all the celebrating when it comes time to give back to God part of what we have been blessed with." Could it be that our somber, quiet offering time is a reflection of our sowing sparingly? What could giving cheerfully look like in our congregation? What does it mean for you to give back to God part of what you have been blessed with?

Prayer: Lord help me to sow generously and cheerfully. Amen.

Wednesday: Read 1 Peter 1: 18-25

We hear challenging messages from the world around us: "You have only one life so why not live it up." Or "You are a nobody in this universe and you are on a one way track to death." Words like these seek to define our lives. They are powerful and seductive. But there is another word! "That word is the good news that was announced to you"(v. 25). You are born anew as a new being through the preaching of the word. You are born anew in baptism and your new life will never perish. You are born anew through the bread and wine and words of the Lord's Supper. You are born anew through the life giving power of the words of scripture. Here's the rub...new people do new things. That's the message here. As some have put it, we are called to become who we are. The Christian doesn't seek to live out the gospel in order to become a Christian. The Christian lives out the gospel because she/he is a Christian. In what ways do you live out the gospel in your life? What does it look like to love others deeply, from the heart?

Prayer: Lord, may I live out your love with my whole life. Amen.

Thursday: Read Deuteronomy 30: 15-30

Idolatry manifested itself in many ways throughout the Old Testament: the worship of other deities, of idols or images of Yahweh. Idolatry also manifests itself in multiple ways in twenty-first-century Christianity. We make idols out of public figures; new technology; sporting events. Even within the

church, we may act as if church buildings, particular theological tenets, or keeping the "right people" in or out is more important than the worship of God alone. The impact of these idolatries on ourselves, our neighbors, and God's creation is easily identifiable. If we serve wealth instead of God, the poor suffer. If we serve consumption instead of God, the environment suffers. If we serve pride or fear instead of God, both we and our neighbors suffer. Service of God alone must be the beacon that guides our journey through daily life, or else we face both spiritual and physical death. Choosing life means practicing life, turning away from idols and turning back towards God. When was the last time you connected what you said and what you did with who God is for you? If "choose life" was the test case for what we did and said we might pause before we lash out in anger and fear. We might take a moment before we label someone. We might stop and think, is what I am about to say and what I am about to do something that would be recognizable as life-giving, life-upholding, life-empowering?

Prayer: May I always choose life through you, O God. Amen.

Friday: Read Romans 12: 1-8

Looking at the first two verses, we might conclude that worship is adequately performed through our corporate liturgy, preaching, and music. These practices are not wrong; but they do not reach far enough. For Paul, worship is full-bodied. It happens in community as we live out our faith by serving one another to build up the body of Christ. The quality of our worship is not measured by what happens on only Sunday mornings, but by what happens when we are together Monday through Saturday. We do not all have the same gifts and that is a good thing. Our combined gifts, used together, make up the body of Christ. When we partner with one another in ministry, using our varied spiritual gifts, we become the grace of God in action. What does having a full-bodied faith mean to you? What gifts do you have that can be used in ministry at your workplace, in your neighborhood, around the world?

Prayer: Lord, use my gifts in your ministry to the glory of God. Amen.

Saturday: Read Matthew 10: 1-4, 40-42

Sent by God. Jesus sends his disciples to participate in his mission of proclaiming in word and deed the good news of God's kingdom drawing near. Matthew assumes that the church is a "sent" church, a missionary church (Matthew 28:18-20). There is simply no other way to be the church! There is growing awareness that mission is not just a program of the church; it is (or ought to be) the defining purpose of everything the church does. What does it mean to be sent? Perhaps not all are sent to be wandering missionaries, depending on others for shelter and sustenance, but that doesn't mean we are off the hook. All who follow Jesus are sent into the world to tell and embody the good news of Jesus Christ. All are sent to bear Christ to others with humility and vulnerability. What would happen if we stopped expecting people to come on their own initiative through our church doors, and instead took seriously our calling to bring the gospel to them? What would happen if we truly believed that we bear the presence of Christ to every person we encounter, in every home, workplace, or neighborhood we enter? What would happen if we saw every conversation as an opportunity to offer a cup of cold water; speak words of grace; embody Christ's love for the neighbor?

Prayer: Here I am Lord, send me. Amen.