

Creeds of faith have come into being as the church sought to articulate faith in the face of controversy. The Apostles' Creed, and the Nicene Creed are found in books of worship and hymnals for the churches benefit. These creeds deserve our attention for they help us keep focused upon the important points of our faith. They also keep us from teaching insufficient or incomplete descriptions of faith. Some groups will focus all their attention upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit and others might determine that faith must focus solely upon God the Son. Yet to focus upon one and diminish or exclude the other aspects of God is inadequate and incomplete picture of our faith. Over the next five weeks we will look closely at the Apostles creed. This will give us a great overview of our faith and provide clarity into what we profess.

The Apostles Creed begins with this declaration "I Believe!" It seems as if this statement is a simple one yet there are important implications for the person making this assertion. The statement doesn't necessarily share overwhelming conviction or allegiance. There are numerous things we can believe in. I can say in I believe in God, and in the same breath say, I believe in Santa Clause, the Easter Bunny, aliens, ghosts, monsters, and so on. As a faith statement "believe" means to be in agreement with. There is a general consent that God exists, yet this is inadequate at best for as I said earlier many may feel that aliens exist. The meaning that must be conveyed is "**I put my trust in God**" or "**I place my confidence in God**" this is an important distinction for this shares much more than a belief that God exists and set the standard for the way we live out our faith (Heb 11:1). One commentary shares this, *Faith involves absolute confidence in God's historical saving acts*. This confidence anchors us in our faith in God much like a ship is anchored to the ocean floor (Heb 6:19-20).

"I believe" shares our commitment to God. We just don't believe in things about God but we commit ourselves to God in every aspect of our lives. Committing ourselves to God calls for obedience to live our lives for God. (James 1:22) Here is where many miss the boat. There is head knowledge or assent to God but absent is the trust, commitment, and obedience to God. I like this statement, "*Faith is not just about believing in God, it is about trusting Him and allowing Him to take hold of us and transform us*" [1] Many believe in God, but when it comes to being transformed by God and trusting in Him for every aspect of our lives we fall short.

I close with this story from John Wesley, *In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while the leader was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away **my** sins, even **mine**, and saved **me** from the law of sin and death.*

Before Wesley went to this meeting he believed with His mind that God could forgive sins, but it wasn't till after the meeting that He experienced the forgiveness of sins. Where do you find yourself today? You may believe in God, you may believe he forgives sins but have you experienced God's love? Have you experienced the forgiveness of your sins? Do you trust in Him for every aspect of your life? If not than your belief is nothing more than a token acknowledgment that you feel God exists. You can move from believing in your mind and experiencing, trusting, and obediently reflecting Christ in your life!

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. AMEN.

## *The Authority to Forgive*

February 14, 2010

We all have testimonies if we have been forgiven by Jesus Christ. The reason we share testimonies is to relate the work of God in our lives to those listening. As you read this testimony listen for the work of God.

I dread to think where I would be today if God had not saved me. My drug and alcohol abuse started when I was 14. First, I was experimenting with tobacco and Marijuana, and quickly began using harder drugs. It wasn't long before Satan was in full control, and I was heavily involved in taking and making drugs. This led to extreme violence and robbery. I had been in and out of jail since I was 18. I cannot help but weep, when I think of all the men and women's lives I led to destruction. Everything we do in life, good or bad, right or wrong affects EVERYONE around us. Then, while I was sitting in a prison cell, lost, hopeless, and without direction, at the age of 34, God began to work on me. Upon my release His divine direction led me to cross paths with a backslider from the Rialto church, who invited me to one of their services. In 1997 I met my Redeemer. By March of 1998 I had received the Holy Ghost was baptized in Jesus name. I carried a lot of baggage to the altar that day. But after laying it all down, and giving it all over to Him who is "Altogether Lovely", He made all my burdens roll away. I cannot begin to express the love and peace I felt that day, and still do today... [1]

Think about your life. What is your story? Are there things from your past that haunt you? Are you feeling so guilty over choices in life that you are convinced that God will never forgive you for what you have done? Satan is so pleased with this behavior, Why? because you are not living in the freedom of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Yet there is good news! The good news found in Matthew 9 is that Jesus has the authority to forgive. Jesus has the authority to forgive your sin. It doesn't matter what you have done in the past because the forgiving of your sin does not depend upon you. There is nothing you can do to make God love you more and there is nothing you can do to make Him love you less. Freedom from sin is the work of Jesus Christ. He has been given the authority not you, not me, no human being has any recourse when it comes to redemption or release from our sins. Satan wants us to think we can have some impact on God's favor. So he makes us feel guilty and say things like, "*I can never be forgiven for what I have done*" what a huge lie! Jesus came to give us freedom from sin and this is the hope we have.

What is your story? Are there things from your past that haunt you? Are you feeling so guilty over choices in life that you are convinced that God will never forgive you for what you have done? Live in the freedom of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Reading: Matthew 9:1-8

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[1] <http://www.wordsoftestimony.com>

**February 7, 2010**

## **The Basics**

Tonight at 6:25 pm Eastern time Super bowl XLIV between the AFC champion Indianapolis Colts and the NFC champion New Orleans Saints will get under way. These two teams didn't get here by accident. The preparation for the 2009-2010 season started months ago when spring training began. The lessons learned in those early practices carried both teams to this point in the season as the two top teams in the NFL. Neither team earned a trip to Miami Florida without mastering the fundamentals of the sport.

Faith is much the same, although faith is practiced under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We cannot improve upon our faith unless we understand the basic tenants of our faith. As we come to church this morning we will soon participate together in the Lord's Table. In this act we are getting back to the basics. In Luke 22:19 we hear these words, "And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Remembrance of the foundational truths of our faith helps us to grow and can help us avoid paths which are misleading and even confusing. Through the act of remembrance we are put in touch with the Holy Spirit as we live the faith that we profess.

Peter shares the fundamentals of faith when he writes, "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup>and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,*" 1 Peter 1:3 Jesus calls us into acts of visual and spiritual remembrance as we meet Him at His table today. As we hear the words of institution and consecration and make our way to the communion table we are making our way to a place of victory. It is through approaching Jesus Christ that we receive the forgiveness He provides as well as victory over sin and death. Rom 6: 23 "*For the wages of sin is death....Those who know Jesus but fall away and forget the basics of faith are not fit to come into the presence of God . But we know that sin doesn't need to produce death for Paul goes on to say in the same verse, "...but the gift of God is eternal life in<sup>£</sup> Christ Jesus our Lord.."*"

I am sure that the coaches for the Saints and Colts will tell the players, "Play good solid fundamental football today." Forgetting the basics will cause penalties, poor decisions, and dumb mistakes. As Christians we embrace the basics of faith in order to move ahead in Jesus Christ. We must first know Him as our Savior who loved us unconditionally, even before we sinned, and died for those sins that we might know eternal life. These are the basics of faith. We seek to be more like Jesus and shed the old nature we knew before our encounter with Jesus and receive the new nature that comes from walking with Jesus. Getting back to the basics should call us into deeper relationship with Jesus through His word, the scriptures found in the Bible, through opening our hearts and lives to the renewing breath of the Holy Spirit as we commit ourselves to Him.

Readings: 1 Peter 1:3, Isaiah 1:15-18

January 31, 2010

## Cities of Refuge

Cities of refuge as describe in Joshua 20 were commanded by God to care for people. *The idea behind these cities of refuge was not to provide a screen for guilty persons, but to give the person who accidentally (or, through no fault of his own) killed another person, protection from the vengeance of the dead person's relatives until the facts could be established. In the city of refuge he would be tried by the elders of the city to determine whether the death had resulted from accident (manslaughter) or premeditated murder in the first degree if the person was turned over to the avenger. If not guilty of murder, he was expected to stay in the city of refuge he had sought out until the death of the nation's ruling high priest (Num. 35:28). At that time he was free to go wherever he wished and the avenger was forbidden to harm him in any way. If he left the city of refuge before the death of the current high priest, he could be attacked and killed [1]*

As I think about Cities of Refuge in the Old Testament I think about the church today. I am not talking about the church as an institution but church as the body of Christ called to be his hands and feet in the world. The church is to be a place where people are accepted and by the gospel transformed into new creations and disciples of Jesus Christ. Too often members of churches feel they have entitlements since they have been in the body for a period of time. We have our own pews which no one else should dare to sit in. We think that everyone who comes into the church should look, think, talk, act, believe, and be like us. If they are not, then we are not happy with their participation. And the very people whom God seeks to use to win the world unto himself can become the very people who chase them away from him. If the message we give is one of rejection then those who need God may determine that God doesn't want them or love them based upon the actions of His church.

Maybe what keeps the church from being Cities of Refuge is our attitude about whom the church belongs to. ([read the article on my page "Bob's Corner"](#)). The Church of Jesus Christ is to be a place of comfort to those needing comfort, a place of hope for those who feel hopeless, a place of love for people who have been rejected, and the list goes on. Will we embrace all people and bring them face to face with Jesus Christ who can free them from their bondage and sin as he did for those of us who already received salvation. If we are Cities of Refuge then God will provide! How do we measure up as a City of Refuge for Jesus Christ?

**Readings:** Joshua 20:1-9, "To Whom Does The Church Belong?"([Article on Bob's Corner](#))

**January 17, 2010**

***The Danger of Hidden Sin***

On Saturday evening I watched the NFL playoff game between the Arizona Cardinals and the New Orleans Saints. During the game Kurt Warner the Cardinals Quarter Back took a hit that left him with a temporary injury. Warner threw an interception and as he was focused on pursuing the ball carrier he didn't see the blocker to his right and he was hit hard. The hit lifted him off his feet, his neck snapped very hard, and he landed right on his back. As I think about it, I realize that it wasn't the visible thing that was dangerous; it was what he didn't see that caused his injury. This is true of many things. The bee in the grass that you step on and get stung, the snake in the pile of brush that bites you, the car that you pulled out in front of in an accident, for our soldiers overseas it's the hidden roadside bombs, the snipers, the other hidden dangers.

This is what happened to Joshua as he sent soldiers to defeat the city of Ai. The battle was to be a very easy battle for the Israelites but 36 of the 3000 men were killed and the rest were chased out of Ai. Joshua didn't understand why, but the Lord told him that it was because of the hidden sin of the Israelites that they were defeated. Achan stole from the items that were supposed to be offered to God and this in turn angered God.

God punished Israel for the hidden sin of one person. When Achan was removed from the picture Israel defeated Ai and inherited the land he promised to them. The story tells us that there is danger in hidden sin. God hates sin and he hates how it causes his people to be in rebellion and to live in disobedience. Un-confessed sin is hidden sin, disobedience is hidden sin, gossip is hidden sin, strife between the people of God is hidden sin, and many more. Not only does it affect the individual but the entire church. When we are living as a church with any form of hidden sin in our fellowship we are kept from the favor of God.

It is imperative we think about this, for we are to be a church that is fulfilling the goal to "Know Christ and to make Him Known", we cannot be members who are harboring sin in our lives. God is not pleased with sin in any form and when we live with un-confessed sin in our lives it drives a wedge in our relationship with God. Achan's sin angered God and God would not bless the Israelites. When we live in sin God will not bless us. We have a calling from God to "go and make disciples" The Holy Spirit is grieved when we live in un-confessed sin. We are unable to fulfill the great Commission or please God in any way if we harbor un-confessed sin. Sin must be removed from our individual lives as well as our corporate lives together.

There is a definite correlation between sin and the downfall of God's people and obedience and the flourishing of God's people. Do we as individuals in the church have un-confessed sin in our lives? And if we do is it keeping us from fulfilling God's desires for us as a church. It is something we need to spend time thinking and praying about. If we seek God's favor and blessing we must confess any hidden sin in our lives.

Kurt Warner didn't see the block that knocked him for a loop. What was hidden from him was dangerous. For the church what is hidden is very dangerous. Un-confessed sin has no place in the church and God in his holiness will pass judgment on us until we set ourselves apart as holy people consecrated for the work of the Gospel, not perfect but repentant, obedient, and humble. Take time today to confess our sins and as God forgives us may we be able to see His favor be granted to us once again.

Reading: Joshua 7:10- 26, Isaiah 59, Ephesians 4:29

**January 10, 2010**

## **GO Means GO**

I am excited about the mission trips coming up in the spring. How many of you plan to go on one of these trips? It's an amazing blessing when you go because most of the time you are blessed more than you can expect you will bless someone else. Yet the one thing about going on a mission trip is this, you have to go, you have leave home and travel. So when I ask you to consider going on a mission trip you automatically know you will be leaving Everett and taking a trip. And you would also realize the when you go on a mission trip you are going to provide someone with a service. You may help a family repair their home, clean up after a flood, hurricane or another disaster. You may go to teach people how to do something they are not capable of doing on their own.

Let's think about this. Jesus calls us to go and make disciples. We are commanded by Jesus to "go". Jesus appeals to our sense of respect for His authority "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go....*" If we were all fluent in the language of the New Testament we would all realize that Jesus is telling us to remove ourselves from where we are planted or to depart from the comfortable and the known and to take a journey of faith that empowers us to "make Christ known" to others.

Not only does Jesus tell us to go, but he also instructs us to go and to make disciples. Once again if we were listening to Jesus teach and we were fluent in Greek we would understand that our job is to be individuals who instruct and teach people about Jesus Christ. I tell you this because many churches have become way too complacent about the Great Commission. We sit back and conducted ministry from the relative comfort of the familiar in our own buildings and by our own choosing in contrast to the call to "go" to the places where the un-churched, unsaved, live everyday. Many Christians have been fooled to believe that if we offer a program in the church that we are fulfilling the great commission

I am telling you this because we live in a time when it's imperative that the church take up the cause of the gospel and realize that each and every day we stay cocooned we are allowing someone to slip from the grip of grace and into an eternity separated from God. We worry about offending people but the reality is if we do not listen to Jesus then we will be held accountable for our disobedience. If you believe there is a hell then you realize that without the gospel many of our family, friends, and neighbors are heading in that direction. Are you prepared to accept that? Therefore go and make disciples!

Do you ever get tired of just coming to church and living out the predictable? Do you ever desire to do something for Jesus Christ that allows Him to be taken to those who would never walk through the doors of a big brick church? Are you looking for a Christian walk that challenges you in your faith and rejuvenates and invigorates you as you live as salt and light in the world? There is so much more for you and for me to accomplish as the church and it isn't going to happen if we are comfortable with complacency and isolated from those who so need to hear the truth.

When I was younger and living at home with my parents my dad would often say to me when he told me to go do something and I didn't respond, "*When I say go do something I expect you to go do it right away. Go means go now!*" This year we are going to dream ways to fulfill this commission and we are going to be an obedient church and go into our community, and make disciples. This requires all of us working together to overwhelm the community with the love and grace of Jesus Christ as we share the gospel with those who haven't been instructed. It's a journey we will undertake together. Let's Go and Make disciples for Jesus Christ!

**December 27, 2009**

**Perspective for the New Year**

As a boy and even today, I enjoy the views on the mountain behind our place in Canton. The vantage point is such that I can see up and down that valley and also at a height where I can look down on many houses, fields, and other areas. I remember as boy sitting and staring as far as my eye could see and wondering what was out there, who was out there and what it would be like to be where they are. The intriguing part was not, in the not knowing, but in the wondering and imagining. Yet the hike to the view was always a bit difficult. The New Year always produces feelings which make me sit and wonder what is ahead, who is in the future, and what will this new year bring in my life. The perspective from the mountain is so much different there is so much more to see, so many possibilities. Even though the hike was always a bit difficult the end result was always enjoyable.

Today I want us all to hike up the proverbial mountain and attempt to gain vision of God will have us do in this New Year. What do we expect God to do in 2010? What adjustments to our status quo will we need to make to accommodate God's moving among us? This is an exciting time of the year, a time to dream, a time to plan, a time to examine the past but move boldly into the future as children of God. Can we accomplish the seemingly impossible this year? With God's help nothing is impossible.

Let's turn to Deuteronomy 34:1. As His church, and faithful workers, what do we envision ourselves accomplishing for God this New Year? How will we allow ourselves to be used? As we think about these two questions I want each of us to be open to the Holy Spirit.

As the church we need to examine how we will do ministry in the upcoming year, but the churches ministries will only be as successful as each of you provide the leadership the personal resources for their success. God wants the best you can give to Him. We may need to reprioritize our lives as individuals and as the church for God in 2010 How do we go about this; know his word, obey his commands, pray, and then serve.

If each one would commit to one aspect of ministry as directed by the Holy Spirit then there would be no way that one, two, or twenty people carry the whole load. Each one would fulfill their role in the body and the body would function properly. What is our view from the top of the mountain? The place where we see more clearly, dream more readily, and imagine the possibilities from a different perspective. With God all things are possible.

Reading: Deuteronomy 34:1-5

**December 20, 2009**

**Fourth Sunday in Advent**

**From the Obscure**

The passage this morning takes us back the place of Jesus birth...Bethlehem

Ephratha. Bethlehem was small in relationship to the other clans of Judah. There was nothing special about Bethlehem. It wasn't a place of great wealth. There were no notable landmarks or places of interest. It was a rather obscure place, but from this obscure place God chose to reveal himself to the world. From his conception Jesus reveals His humility in coming to the earth. He is not presumptuous, arrogant, nor haughty! He was born to a young virgin named Mary, who came from a rather common family. His crib was a manger. He was not surrounded by royalty but by animals and shepherds. His birth announcement was not read from the mouth of king's servants, but shared by hosts of angels from heaven. Jesus did not live among royalty in a palace, but was born into a working class family and raised in the home of a carpenter. His hometown of Nazareth was not a place of prominence, as matter of fact Nazareth did not have a good reputation in Jesus day (read John 1:46). God used obscure places, situations and people to make great strides for the kingdom. The Christmas story shows us that God's concern isn't about our social status or our station in life. The Christmas story encourages each of us that God can prosper anyone, at anytime, in any context when that person is sold out for the message of faith.

My challenge for you this week is to recognize your significance in the eyes of God. Rejoice in His love for you and His salvation that is freely given by God's grace. Don't be concerned about your socio-economic status, your past shortcomings or how others perceive you. Significance is not found in these areas in God's eyes. Remember how Jesus came to earth, lived his life, and experienced death. Each event happened in relative obscurity, yet the message of salvation has endured for over 2000 years. You are significant. **Even if you feel obscure you can be an important part of the kingdom and the preaching of the message of Christmas.**

**Merry Christmas!**

**Reading: Micah 5:2-5a**

**December 13, 2009**

**Third Sunday in Advent**

**The Heart of Joy**

Joy can be a very subjective topic. Joy can be related to how we feel on any given day. Joy can be rooted in the feelings we have as a result of something exterior to us. Romans 8:37-39 provides us with the depth of our joy. "NO, IN ALL THESE THINGS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US. FOR I AM CONVINCED THAT NEITHER DEATH NOR LIFE, NEITHER ANGELS NOR DEMONS, NEITHER THE PRESENT NOR THE FUTURE, NOR ANY POWERS, NEITHER HEIGHT NOR DEPTH, NOR ANYTHING ELSE IN ALL CREATION, WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD." For the follower of Jesus Christ joy is to be a part of our spiritual lifestyle. The joy that we tend to discuss as a result of what is going on around us is subjective, but joy as found in the life of one filled with the Holy Spirit as a result of faith in Jesus must be objective.

We tend to think of joy as the result of an event that produces a temporary feeling that makes us feel light hearted or which makes us laugh. Joy outside the faith is based up life events and can be temporary. But joy that accompanies the follower of Christ is permanently founded in the faith that we cling to. It is in the one we call God –Father Son and Holy Spirit. It is a joy that is not dependent upon mood or feeling yet is can be with us at all times despite of life events. Joy accompanying the faith will be found as we commit ourselves to God. In the gospel of John 15:9-11 we hear Jesus teach, "AS THE FATHER HAS LOVED ME, SO HAVE I LOVED YOU. NOW REMAIN IN MY LOVE. IF YOU OBEY MY COMMANDS, YOU WILL REMAIN IN MY LOVE, JUST AS I HAVE OBEYED MY FATHER'S COMMANDS AND REMAIN IN HIS LOVE. I HAVE TOLD YOU THIS SO THAT MY JOY MAY BE IN YOU AND THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE COMPLETE." Prior to this passage Jesus refers to faith by the illustration of the vine and the branches. He tells us that healthy branches abide in the vine as they are useless independent of the vine. We are also told that every branch that bears fruit is pruned so that it can bear even more fruit. This once again makes the joy of a Christian peculiar for to be pruned may mean suffering or trial yet that is the means by which God is able to make our joy complete

C Davis writes, THE FULLNESS OF JOY COMES WHEN THERE IS A DEEP SENSE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN ONE'S LIFE. FROM THAT AWARENESS FLOWS THE STRONG DESIRE TO SHARE WHAT ONE IS EXPERIENCING WITH OTHERS. IT IS TOO GOOD TO KEEP FOR ONE'S SELF ALONE" My challenge for you this week is to think about God and how he fits into life. When you think about Him and sense Him look for the of joy that accompanies His presence. May you find true joy In Jesus Christ this advent season and give yourself and God's love away to others.

Readings on Joy: Psalm 126:2-3; Habakkuk 3:17-18; Romans 14:17

**December 6, 2009**

**Second Sunday in Advent**

**Refiner's Fire**

Lost people continue to need someone to announce the Messiah's coming and thus to prepare the way for the Lord's salvation. God does not abandon His people to their own evil choices. He chooses to help people, in this case by sending His messenger to prepare the way before the Lord. John the Baptist fulfilled this role, preparing the way for Jesus

The message that we proclaim is very clear, we are called to share the same message that John shared, "REPENT FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS NEAR". The word repentance is one that the church is very familiar with, yet the person who has not heard of Jesus nor made Jesus their Savior the word may not be so clear. One definition of repentance that has been given is a "change of mind", yet John's idea of repentance was more specific. John when speaking of repentance spoke a turning to God or a returning to God. John's call to repentance was radical: his idea was not a regular turning from sin after a specific act, but to a once and for all repentance, the kind that would be turning from an old way of life to a new way of life as a Gentile converting to Judaism.

Baptism for Gentiles turning to Judaism showed a radical change and turning towards God, and this was John's message, "REPENT FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS NEAR".

My Challenge for you is this, Ask yourselves if you have repented of your sin. Not simply a confession of a one time act, but a recognition that sin keeps you from God. There is a need to turn to God or return to God in a radical way which places us in His care and walk in new life as we turn away from the old self and take on the character of Jesus. Second, that you like John will strive to call all people to repentance so that they might be forgiven by God as they people turn to God for THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS NEAR.

MALACHI 3:1-5

**November 29, 2009**

**First Sunday in Advent**

Today begins the Advent season. The word advent means “arrival” or “coming”. The church is in a time of waiting upon the arrival or coming of Jesus Christ. Our waiting will be found in two very different ways. First we are in a celebratory mood as we await Christmas and realize that Jesus came to the earth as a baby born to Mary to suffer, die, and rise again 3 days later. Secondly we await the coming of Jesus Christ who will return as the King of Kings to claim His church for eternity.

I would be interested to know how many of you live daily as though you fully expected Jesus to return? As a child I was concerned with Christ’s coming. As matter of fact this recognition kept me from doing man things that my friends would do. The question for me always boiled down to, “If Jesus came and caught me doing something that was sinful or offensive to Him how would He feel and ultimately how would I feel?”. The bible is very clear that we must be watchful and expecting Jesus return. We are told in Matthew 24:36 "But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

We are not privy to the time of Christ’s return, therefore we must live as if Jesus were coming today. We are called to be prepared! Romans 13:11 says, “*The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.* The night is nearly over; the day is almost here! As we realize that the time is close we must stand up and lift up our heads for our redemption draws near.

*Readings : Luke 21:25-36, Romans 13:8-14*

**November 22, 2009**

## **The Eternal King**

Today marks the end of the liturgical year for the church and we are invited to consider the rightful position Jesus holds as King of Kings. In John 18:33-37 Jesus stands before Pilate and they have this conversation, *“Are you the king of the Jews?”* <sup>34</sup>*“Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?”* <sup>35</sup>*“Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”* <sup>36</sup>*Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”* <sup>37</sup>*“You are a king, then!” said Pilate.*

In Revelation 19:16 we read of Jesus, *“On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords.”* Jesus sits on His throne waiting to return and take the church into His kingdom. His sovereignty is eternal and he rules over the hearts of His people as His kingdom is lived out in or lives. King of kings is a triumphant title and it signifies sovereignty over all earthly kings.

Is Jesus King over your life? Take time this week to consider the place Jesus assumes in your life. If you are selfishly living your own life then Jesus is not King over it. Allow Christ to be sovereign over every aspect of your life and as earthy subjects are obedient to their King so we are called to be obedient to our heavenly King of Kings.

Reading 1 Timothy 1:17, Revelation 17:12-15

**November 15, 2009**

**Learning to Pray (Our Prayers)**

Communication is important for human beings. We must take time to speak and listen in our relationships and the depth of our relationships are based on the level of intimacy created in our times spent together. I wonder why it is so difficult for us to be people of prayer. I know many of us say prayers, but I am talking about the times of fervent talking and listening before God that builds a strong and profound relationship with Him.

**“God's command to "pray without ceasing" is founded on the necessity we have of his grace to preserve the life of God in the soul, which can no more subsist one moment without it, than the body can without air”** John Wesley

Breathing is a natural act in our lives. We do not think much about it, but realize when we do not have oxygen to breath. How many of us deprive ourselves in our spiritual lives continually because we do not pray.

**Prayer is not so much an act as it is an attitude—an attitude of dependency, dependency upon God.** --Arthur W. Pink

Dependency upon God verses dependency upon ourselves is the choice we have. When we pray we are taking the human component out of the equation and placing our trust in God for the outcome of our petitions. We share our needs before God and we do so frequently. We petition God and then we listen for His direction... His will and desire for us.

What is your level of intimacy with God? My challenge for each of this week is to carve out time in your day to pray earnestly. Make your petitions known to God, and trust that he will hear you and speak to your heart.

Reading: Matthew 6:5-13

**November 1, 2009**

### **What Do People See? (Our Witness)**

What do people see when they look at Christians? How about when your friends look at you? Is your life a witness for Jesus Christ? I strongly believe that as Christians we are to transform the world. Christians have the responsibility to be ambassadors for Christ. Paul tells the church in Corinthians, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:20-21) Our witness is expected and our witness is to affect others with the grace of Jesus Christ. Yet witness is not simply the act of telling people about Jesus Christ. Witness involves our actions and our words. James says, "what good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?" James 2:1 In other words, our witness is both verbal and expresses our faith. James also says, Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do" Witness is the ability given to us by the Holy Spirit to be salt and light in the world. We affect the world like salt affected fish or meat in preserving it for future use. Salt also serves as an antiseptic. As witnesses, we are to affect the world in a way that helps it to heal and to be preserved for the kingdom of God.

Readings: 2 Corinthians 5:20 James 2:1 Matthew 5:13-16

October 25, 2009

### **Good Deeds (Our Service)**

Service is born out of obedience to God. Jesus provides such a powerful definition of service as he kneels before the disciples to wash their feet at the Passover meal. Jesus lives the example He wanted to convey to the disciple and to you and me who are His church today. We are told in John 13:16 "... no servant is greater than his master..." therefore our acts of service are expected. So we need to understand that Christian service is not a thing that we "do" but it is a commitment that we make as a result of our relationship with Jesus. When we serve we are living for Jesus and acting on His behalf. His instruction is that we love one another as He loved us and that as he cared for people we too ought to care those around us! Are you actively serving Christ by being in ministry to others? Do you practice good deeds as a outcome of your faith in Christ? Remember you are not greater than Jesus therefore serve as he served.

James 2:14-19

**October 18, 2009**  
**Honor the Lord (Our Gifts)**

I looked on the internet for people's theology on giving and found many are opposed to tithing. They indicate that it is not a principle the NT church needs to follow. They feel the tithe had nothing to do with money only grains, crops, those agricultural products raised. And then there are others who feel that God is being pretty generous with the 90 -10 split. Duet 6:5 says "LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH." This passage allows me to preach this message this morning since all that we are is to be given over to God. Those who know God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have a claim upon their lives which states, "...[YOU] ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY, AND IN YOUR SPIRIT, WHICH ARE GOD'S." 1 Cor 6:20. Next time you go to a restaurant and throw down a 20% offering to your waitress consider your tithe to the Lord. Scripture says, "LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH." for "...[YOU] ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY, AND IN YOUR SPIRIT, WHICH ARE GOD'S." Your giving is between you and your God. Your obedience is not to the person asking you to tithe, but to God who sees your heart daily. God has blessed each of us and is asking that we give back to him. You must decide for yourself. It is a heart issue! God is giving you 90% and only asking for 10%--and he loves a cheerful giver. You will never miss what is not yours so set aside the Lord's tithe and use the rest for yourself. I'll close with this short quote, "IT'S NOT HOW MUCH OF MY MONEY WILL I GIVE TO GOD, BUT HOW MUCH OF GOD'S MONEY WILL I KEEP FOR MYSELF" May God bless you in your decision!  
Proverbs 3:5-10

**October 11, 2009**

***A Heart Issue (Introduction to Series)***

As the church, we too are called to be people who consecrate ourselves to the Lord. And the whole idea of consecration is to dedicate or sanctify oneself to God. This means that we are to set apart our lives as lives open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. We are to recognize that all we have is God's and we are to be good stewards of the blessings He bestows upon us. See when it comes right down to it all aspects of our faith become issues of the heart.

We all have obligations in life and we all have times when we are not able to do certain things, but when it comes right down to it, IS GOD PRIORITY #1 IN OUR LIVES? This is what consecration is all about--setting ourselves apart for the work of the Lord. The spiritual life is truly a heart issue.

I Samuel 1:24-28

**September 27, 2009**  
**Not Too Bad**

Psalm 51 is a beautiful passage of scripture to share the grace and love of God for anyone who falls into sin and is willing to repent. David recognizes his sin with Bathsheba and how low his sin had taken him. He stole Uriah's wife, had Uriah murdered, yet David knew that God was a God of forgiveness. He humbled himself before God and confessed his sin and in confession repented. David addresses the grace and mercy of God and asks God to forgive him. David owns up to his misdeeds and puts his full confidence in God for his forgiveness. He asks God to make him into a new creature. *"Create in me a clean heart and renew a loyal spirit within me."* The act of repentance is a turn from what is displeasing to God and a willingness to allow God to recreate us and move us to a position of loyalty to Him.

What areas in your life do you need to give to God this morning? Turn away from them and never return to them.

Psalm 51

**September 13, 2009**  
**"Taking Possession of the Land"**

God has placed us in Everett not just to have a presence in our community but to impact our community and transform it through the gospel of Christ. There will be some scary moments that we will face, but we know that He who is in us is greater than the one in the world. As you listen to all the things that are happening around you, as you see the needs that are right in front of your eyes, and as you hear the cry of the needy in our community and world, as you understand the brokenness of people who are hurting for any number of reasons, listen closely to what God is directing you to do, and like Caleb, may we all stand up and say "take possession of the land"

Readings: Numbers 13:26-33, Joshua 1:6

**September 6, 2009**  
**"Submission and Humility"**

How can you win in the spiritual battle? Submit to God - look up the definition of submission and every day choose to be submissive to God.

Readings: James 4:1-10, Zechariah 4:6, Job 1:12

**August 30, 2009**

**"Scouting the Other Team"**

Pastor Bob shared Satan's Playbook -

- 1) Deception Revelation 12:7-8
  - 2) Temptation Matthew 4:3
  - 3) Accusations Revelation 12:10
  - 4) Falsehoods II Corinthians 11:4, I Timothy 1:3, Colossians 2:8
  - 5) Misdirection II Corinthians 2:4
- Reading: 1 Peter 5:6-11

**August 23, 2009**

**"Suit Up!"**

Pastor Bob's request this week was this: Each morning pray that each piece of God's armor is in place before you start your day

Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20

**August 16, 2009**

Pastor Debi's sermon today was titled **"Learning to Walk"**

Reading: Ephesians 5:15-20

**August 9, 2009**

Pastor Debi asked why couldn't EUMC be Encouraging United Methodist or Evangelism United Methodist –

Today's sermon - **EUMC - The Body of Christ**

Readings: 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 18-20, 24 - 27 and Jeremiah 29:11-12

**August 2, 2009**

Take the time to see how well you are anchored in your faith.

Reading: Hebrews 6:19-20