

Fall Semester 2019

New Testament II: Pauline Epistles
Old Testament II: Historical Books
Preaching I
Spiritual Formation I
Modern Church History

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WELCOME TO CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH!

Sunday, July 21st, 2019

Making disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, living for God's glory.



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Today's service:
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GROWING IN GRACE

I need to develop godly attitudes.

- A) Pray for godly attitudes in general & certain attitudes in particular.
- B) Ask others to pray the same thing for you.
- C) Repeat the attitude to help it sink in. Do this in conjunction with A & B!

Attitudes.

1. The devil can only parody, bend and break, he cannot truly create.
2. The question is never, "Will I worship?" The question is always, "Who or what am I worshipping?"
3. God grant me a faith-filled endurance and an enduring faithfulness.

I need to grow in prayer.

A great way to do this is to learn to pray the Bible. Pray this prayer until you can pray without reading:

Dear God, I confess that I forget that I am a worshipping creature who always worships. Please help me to worship You alone. Thank You that Jesus died on the cross to reconcile me to You. Thank You that when I turn to Him in repentance and faith, my name is written in the Lord's Book of Life. Please help me to live with an enduring faithfulness in You and please grant me to live with faith-filled endurance for You. In Jesus name. Amen.

I need to get God's word in my mind and heart.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

Psalms 19:1

I need to do something or start to do something.

Complete the following sentence: "In light of God's word, the Holy Spirit is leading me to _____."

The Environment

Friends,

The well-being of our environment has become one of the issues most important to Canadians. This shows up in how we vote and engage economically. You've probably recognized that Canadians and even Christians are divided on how we should feel about this issue, especially when interpreting the scientific data. While I am not prepared to speak scientifically or politically to this issue, the Bible and the Gospel speak adequately to its moral dimensions.

As I attended the God and the Natural World Conference presented by RZIM last week, I was surprised and encouraged by the presentations. Here are a few reflections I would like to share with you.

The evangelical church has (often) been seen as a nuisance to discussing issues of the environment. Why? Partly because for years popular Christianity claimed that the earth would burn, making way for a good spiritual heaven. Fixated on this idea, some Christians showed little concern for protecting the corrupted and temporary physical world. Meanwhile, other Christians adopted the view that God created the earth for us. Although this isn't wrong, it's only partly true. This is the anthropocentric (or human-centered) view of the world in which people are the highest moral agents over nature. A more biblically robust view is the idea that human beings serve God in His creation as stewards. This is the theocentric (or God-centered) view of the world in which God is the highest moral agent. This view is supported by the many Hebrew psalms and prophets who have spoken of how creation will praise God as it was made to do from the beginning (Ps. 19:1-2; Rom. 8:19-23).

So what does a theocentric view of creation look like for Christians today? First, it recognizes that God made everything fundamentally good and that He later placed a curse on the world as a righteous response to human rebellion. This is why in the world we have good and bad things, coherence and incoherence, order and chaos. Second, it recognizes God's promise for a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21). The idea that matter will be recreated in the future reinforces the idea that the physical is not to be abused or wasted because it is part of God's good design. Third, a theocentric view recognizes that, as Christians who have received God's mercy at the cross, we seek to live in light of our hope for the new creation; the way we relate to and live in the world today can and should reflect how we will one day live in a new creation where God dwells with His people (v. 22). These truths have compelled Christians to express praise to God for His handiwork through songs of worship over the years.

Popular philosophies like humanism and atheism champion anthropocentrism (as opposed to theocentrism) while increasingly expressing anti-human sentiments. Although they claim the universe is an amoral, cosmic accident that is always evolving, they teach that we must preserve this unique stage of its evolutionary development, and thus they posit a moral imperative. As part of the solution to the human problem, extremists call for the eradication of the human race. Although the desire for environmental well-being is good, these philosophies are ultimately inconsistent and ineffective in the long run.

The Gospel, on the other hand, provides a logical basis for caring for our environment. As we receive God's love for us at the cross, we respond in love to God by living to His glory in the world He delights in and created for His praise and our enjoyment. It's only when Jesus becomes our Savior that we can begin to walk in true harmony with our Creator and with His handiwork.

Jonathan