

Sunday, January 19, 2014

Welcome – Greg Snow

Preparing Hearts For Worship – Psalm 19:1 (Source: Warren Wiersbe)

Good Morning! Today is the Lord's Day. The day in which God commanded his chosen people to come together so that we may worship Him in spirit and in truth. We come together as a group of people from many different avenues of life. But one thing we do have in common: we are desperately in need of transformation. We are weary of "business as usual." We need and want a transforming experience from the Lord, the kind of spiritual visitation that will help to heal our broken homes and that will strip away our religious veneer and get us back to reality; something that will restore true spiritual values and replace the cheap counterfeits we've been imposing on ourselves and the lost world; something that will, most of all, bring such glory to God that the world will sit up and take notice and fess that "God is truly among you."

I encourage you to take the next few moments to turn your thoughts to God, silently praying, asking our Lord Jesus Christ to *fill our worship with grace, that every thought, word, and deed may be acceptable to Him, our Rock and our Redeemer.* Let's pray.

Call to Worship – Psalm 27/John 4:23

Let us worship God, our light and our salvation.

The Lord is the stronghold of our lives.

We desire to live in God's house and to seek God in his holy temple.

We have come with shouts of joy, to sing and to make music to the Lord.

Let us worship God in spirit and in truth.

Teach us your ways and make straight our paths in this hour of worship and always.

Oh, come, let us sing and make music to the Lord!

Songs of Worship – O Worship the King/We Will Glorify

Confession of Sin & Prayer

If we truly desire to glorify God and worship Him in spirit and in truth, we must first come to Him with a broken heart and a humble spirit. The more we worship, the more our hearts are humbled before Him. There is no room for pride in the presence of the Lord. Scripture teaches us that Abraham stood before the Lord and saw himself as "dust and ashes," Isaiah saw himself as an unclean man with unclean lips, and Job cried out, "I am vile!" In Luke 5:8, Simon Peter saw the blessing of God, and fell down before Jesus and cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Some of God's choices gifts are for those who know the blessing of a broken heart.

Let us take this time to silently pray to God, confessing our sins, just like Abraham, Isaiah, Job, & Simon Peter, asking Him to purify our heart, soul, and mind. Let's pray.

Soaking Up the Savior's Spirit – (Source: John MacDuff, 1885)

Hear the words of John MacDuff, a Scottish preacher who prayed these words in 1885:

We commend all belonging to us to Your sovereign care. May Your love reign paramount within us--may there be no competing affection. May we seek to show by our pure lives and consistent walk—that we have been soaking up the Savior's spirit. Take these unworthy, erring hearts—sanctify and seal them for Yourself. Make them Yours—Yours only, and Yours wholly, and Yours forever!

Song of Praise – O Great God

Assurance of Salvation – Isaiah 44:21-22

Hear these words of assurance, found in Isaiah 44:21-22

Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you, you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me. I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you.

Song of Praise – There Is A Fountain

Offering - “The kingdom of God does not consist in talk, but in power, that is, in works and practice. God loves the ‘doers of the word’ in faith and love, and not the ‘mere hearers,’ who, like parrots, have learned to utter certain expressions with readiness.” Martin Luther

Lift Up Your Drooping Withered Leaves and Live – Matthew 21:18-22 (Source: Ligonier Ministries/John MacDuff)

Hear the word of the Lord, found in Matthew 21:18-22

In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, “May no fruit ever come from you again!” And the fig tree withered at once.

When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither at once?” And Jesus answered them, “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”

During springtime, Palestinian fig trees begin producing immature, edible figs. Ripe, sweet figs are harvested in the summer, the season for figs to which the gospel refers. Lush foliage signals that *the figs* are present; which is why Jesus rightly expects fruit when He combs through the leaves; yet appearances are deceiving in this case.

Our Savior's damnation does more than just express His righteous anger at the lack of figs. As John Calvin comments, Christ intends "to present in this tree an outward sign of the end which awaits hypocrites, and at the same time to expose the emptiness and folly of their boasting." Jesus curses the fig tree in the context of His teaching on hypocrisy: He casts out temple merchants who exploit others while claiming to serve God; He must deal with religious authorities who will not recognize John the Baptist's divine authority; He tells a parable that condemns those who pledge service but then do nothing. Christ's curse is a foreshadowing of what will happen to hypocrites — those Israelites who, like the fig trees with leaves, promise fruit but fail to deliver.

It was with the pretentious leaves of this same tree, that Adam and Eve, in Paradise, sought to cover their nakedness. God stripped away the leafy garments, and provided them instead, with the hides--the skins of the animals slain on the sacrificial altar. That was the earliest of the Bible's acted parables. It was a Gospel Parable uttered in Eden, but one full of gracious comfort to the Church in every age. The fig-tree clothing of self-righteousness is utterly unavailing; the Lord who walks amid the trees of the garden strips it away--it cannot abide His righteous glance, His avenging scrutiny. But He has a blessed substitute at hand. He has woven, into a divine texture, the leaves of the Tree of life for the healing of the nations. "I will bring near," says He, "my righteousness"--the covering, the glorious vesture provided by the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world. He reveals "the righteousness of Christ, which is unto all and upon all those who believe." Oh! dead, barren fig-tree, lift up your drooping withered leaves and live. "*For whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life!*"

Songs of Worship – *When I Survey/Worthy is the Lamb*

Message – *"The Cursing of the Fig Tree"*

Scripture Reference: Matthew 21:18-22

Time of Prayer

Song of Worship – *Softly and Tenderly*

Benediction