

2-5-23 Sermon #5z Communion

This past week, I was in Arizona visiting with my mom. When I go there, I love being able to visit with my family, but I do miss the safety of the church. From the time I land in Las Vegas till I fly out of Las Vegas, the culture is so different, and I feel like a fish out of water. Also, my family's lifestyle is different than what I'm used to, and coming home brings me a feeling of spiritual relief.

When we go to places that are very different from what we're used to, it can be mentally challenging. My siblings have difficulty with language, and I'm not used to being around people who speak that way. I can see how it makes my mom uncomfortable and she does ask them to stop using bad language.

By Friday, I was ready to come home and it's interesting to see how God shows up in some of the strangest ways. On Wednesday, I had already been working on today's message, but on Friday night when I went to bed, God changed that. I turned on the TV and Family Feud was playing. I wasn't planning on watching the feud, but the question caught my attention.

The question was: When you're at church and you're asked to bow your head and pray, what do you pray for? The family who won the right to play struggled with coming up with answers, and their answers were so dismissive towards God. They quickly got three strikes, but some of their weird answers were actually up on the board. Even Steve Harvey was shocked at a couple of them.

The opposing family gathered to discuss an answer, and they responded by saying: "I pray that church would be over", and it was actually up on the board!

Since we've been talking a lot about prayer and because we've been seeing God answer a lot of prayer, I was caught off guard. Hearing the things that these families came up with makes me feel sorry for them.

I would be lost without prayer in my life. Sadly, life without God isn't uncommon.

Before moving to Ohio, Trish and I lived in a town in Michigan called Plymouth. "GO BLUE!" Approximately 30-45 miles away, there's a small town called "Hell". I was warned to stay away because if you're not a native, you're not welcome.

A while back, I watched a documentary about ghost towns in California, and it created a curiosity in me. Why would people want to live in that kind of environment? One of the last ghost towns in California is named Slab City. It's a place where people go to live off the grid, do drugs, live without laws, and escape from the world. Some people do drugs, live recklessly, and sleep in the dirt... but it seems like most are simply seeking a place to belong. There is a fundamental harmony within everyone who lives there. They came to Slab City for different reasons, but when it comes down to it, the people who stuck around all found a common logic, reason, or motive.

Another ghost town is called Bodie. This is now a State Historic Park. William (Waterman) S. Bodie founded Bodie in 1859 after discovering a modest amount of gold in the hills around the town. By 1880, the city had grown to almost 10,000 people and was famous for being lawless. During the town's heyday, it was reported to have 65 saloons, and several brothels and gambling halls.

This desire to live lawless is also found in the bible. One example of this is found in Genesis 18 and 19. This is the story about Sodom and Gomorrah. It's a sad story that reminds us of just how much God hates sin. (I found an article from the web that gives a good overview.)

During the time of Abraham, three angels came to visit him, and two of the angels decided to go visit Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord told Abraham that he would destroy the city because of the people's sins. God also told Abraham that he would spare the people and not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if he could find even ten righteous people. When the two angels arrived in Sodom and Gomorrah, a man named Lot invited them to stay at his home. Some men from the city came to Lot's home demanding to be given the two visitors so they could have sex with them. Lot, trying to defend and protect the angels, offered the men his virgin daughters in their place. As the angry men tried to break into Lot's home, the angels struck the men blind and then led Lot and his family out of the city. As Lot's family fled Sodom and Gomorrah, God rained down, burning sulfur onto the city. All men, animals, and vegetation were destroyed. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah continues to reach through time as a warning to mankind. God is full of love and compassion, but He is also holy and just. The Creator and Sustainer of all things cannot have anything to do with sin and ungodliness, and rebellion against the Most High will not be allowed to continue indefinitely ([1 John 3:8](#)). A holy God requires justice, and the wrath unleashed on [Sodom and Gomorrah](#) is a foreshadowing of the ultimate justice coming on the day of final judgment. This story is also one of God's great mercies because Lot and his wife and daughters were spared from the horror of burning sulfur. God knew that the culture of Sodom and the surrounding plains was one of extreme depravity. He also knew this ongoing wickedness and rebellion warred against Lot's soul (2 Peter 2:7 & 8).

We all have free choice. We can either claim Christ, or we can choose to turn away. Negative feelings about praying and having no need to connect with God is very real in our society. I'm going to go back to the question on Family Feud.

When we're at church and bow our heads to pray, what do you pray for?

Think about the question, "Who is this Jesus?"

I hope that by having God answer our prayers it makes a huge difference and is encouraging us to pray more. Knowing God's promises and experiencing them changes the quality of life, and having God's love reign in our hearts is an incredible gift.

Taking a good relationship with God and making it better is available to anyone who asks of God. It so sad to know that living without Christ or living without knowing a relational God isn't new to our society. When Christ came, He came so that all who believe by faith, can be cleansed and forgiven of sin. Entering the kingdom of God is a personal choice.

John 3:3-5 says,

³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.^[a]” ⁴ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

The moment we claim Jesus and are baptized, we become like little children, and we’re washed white as snow.

Matthew 18:1-3:

¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ² He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. ³ And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

I love these verses, and drawing closer to God really does require becoming childlike. Saying yes to Jesus is accepting the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we are no longer slaves to sin. We become holy!!! We become FREE, we become alive!!!

In just a couple of minutes we’re going to be taking the Lord’s Supper. This is a time for us to remember what Jesus had to do so that we can become children of the Most High. We’re going to be reflecting on our individual relationships with Christ. We can celebrate knowing that through Christ, we don’t have to live an empty life. Living only for ourselves and rejecting Christ leads to condemnation and destruction.

Jesus died so we can live. Not just live, but so we can have life abundantly. Jesus was very specific about how we should take communion.

In Luke 22:19-22 it says:

¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.^[a]

Through Christ, we are cleansed of all unrighteousness, and we are all justified by faith.

By taking the Lord’s Supper, we are claiming God’s Holiness.

Let’s pray.