



A WEEKLY RESOURCE FOR LIVING OUT THE WORD OF GOD

What: a weekly resource that helps the community of CCE take the sermon into their lives throughout the week with a variety of reflections, group discussions, and individual practices.

Why: Sermons aren't just for Sunday morning. "We submit ourselves to the way of faith and practice revealed in the Word of God. The sermon is explanation and exhortation, making this Word clear and *applying it to our lives.*" (definition on bulletin)

Individual and communal rhythms that help us take the liturgy into daily life allow us to open ourselves to what God is teaching us through his Word and his people.

Feel free to go through all the days or select one or two exercises that help you apply the sermon to your life this week.

February 16, 2020

Sermon Series: 2020 Vision

Title: Prayer For Abundance

Passage: Ephesians 3: 14-21

OT Reading: Isaiah 49: 8-13

Scott Armstrong

Summary:

In 3:14-21, Paul is moving from praying that we would know how deep the Father's love for us is to praying we would actively experience it and then act on it. He names God as Father who, with the same power that created the heavens, defeats sin and death through Christ the Son, indwelling our hearts with resurrection love. In the same place where we find discouragement, He wants us to find encouragement; in the same place where hopelessness dwells, he wants us to find our Living Hope in Jesus. He wants us to abandon ourselves to the transcendence of God, trusting that though we can never exhaustively know God, everything about Him we do know should create confidence in our selves to trust Him. So what can we do to see that through? First, we ask (prayer) abundantly for abundance. We assume our spiritual imaginations just aren't broad enough to conceive how much He wants to pour into us and so we risk vulnerability

in praying our (sometimes broken) hearts out to Him. Secondly, we lean into the church. How does God often answer our prayers? In the fellow saints that surround us. We are “little Christs”, sent to make Him known to each other—this is the extravagant beauty of being the church.

Monday: Lectio Divina

Take some time to practice an ancient way of reading Scripture. For more on lectio divina click [here](#)

-*(Lectio) Reading.* Slowly read the sermon text (Ephesians 3:14-21) and get a sense of what it is saying. Read it a second time and listen for any words that strike you.

- *(Meditatio) Reflecting.* Read the passage again slowly. As you pause on the words or phrases that stick out to you, take some time to consider what the word, passage, or phrase means (in the context of Scripture) and how God might be using it to speak to anything in particular in your life.

- *(Oratio) Responding.* Read the passage again, slowly. Consider now how God has spoken to *you* in this passage and offer your responses back to Him.

- *(Contemplio) Remaining.* Now, take time to simply remain in the presence of God.

Tuesday: Discussion Guide

Each week we'll provide some questions to consider that will help you take the Scripture and the sermon into a deeper place. We hope this fosters meaningful conversations with those in your community group, your spouse or a friend. Authentic change happens in community.

1. The relationship with our earthly parents, regardless of how good or bad that relationship is, is incomplete. [Human] relationships are by their nature flawed, and point us to a deeper longing that only our Heavenly Father can fulfill. How do you think your relationship with your earthly parents impacts how you see your heavenly Father?

2. Scott quoted Henri Nouwen from his work, *Return of the Prodigal Son*:

“Faith is the radical trust that home has always been there and always will be there. The somewhat stiff hands of the father rest on the prodigal’s shoulders with the everlasting divine blessing “You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests.” Yet over and over again I have left home. I have fled the hands of blessing and run off to faraway places searching for love! This is the great tragedy of my life and of the lives of so many I meet on my journey. Somehow I have become deaf to the voice that calls me Beloved, have left the only place where I can hear that voice, and have gone off desperately hoping that I would find somewhere else that I could no longer find at home.”

Nouwen describes a familiar scene: the struggle within the heart to believe we really are the beloved of the Father. Nouwen talks about fleeing from this home, and becoming deaf to the voice that calls him beloved. Share some ways you identify with this.

3. Read Ephesians 3:17. Paul uses such beautiful imagery to remind the Ephesians that they belong in God’s family: **rooted** and **established** in love! In this life it’s easy to attempt to put down roots in soils (eg, reputation, career, beauty, etc.) that aren’t meant to be life-giving, and can’t sustain us. What “soils” have you sought to be rooted in, only to see your “tree” come crashing down? Why is it important to have our identity firmly grounded in love?

4. When trees experience drought, they actually grow deeper roots. And some plants produce richer fruit if the vines have experienced the struggle of drought. When suffering comes our way, Scripture tells us it's possible to find joy if we lean into the promise that God's love is deep enough to sustain us. Reflect on a time when you experienced God's deep love for you in the midst of pain or difficult circumstances. What did that "drought" teach you about your prayer life and/or the Body of Christ (community of believers surrounding you)?

5. The message challenges us to risk vulnerability in our prayers— because God can do anything, far more than we can ask or imagine— and he does it through the power at work within us. Paul is so passionate about the work of the Holy Spirit within us, a gift that I often take for granted. Spend some time today thanking God for the gift of his spirit dwelling within you. How might God be inviting you to risk losing control and trusting Him with whatever it is you currently face?

6. Scott concluded by saying it's impossible for us to be healthy as Christians without leaning on the church. The church is where God has placed encouragers in our lives, and it's where he transforms us. In what ways is this true in your own life? What life transformations (big or small!) have you seen in your neighborhood community group, or discipleship group? Take some time to celebrate what God has done and is doing in the life of your church. Perhaps this will also inspire deeper, more vulnerable prayers for one another.

Wednesday: Review of Confession

We confess corporately to acknowledge that we all alike fall short of the glory of God, but we also all alike can rest with assurance on His amazing grace.

Ponder the question, "What gets in the way of my experience of God's love?"

Father, you want to lavish us with your power to love us abundantly through Jesus Christ but we struggle to trust that love is there for us. We struggle to believe you are a Father who deeply cares for us and wants to draw close to us through Jesus. And so we have wrestled to maintain control of our lives, have attempted to name our future but we have only managed to sow disorder in our lives and have reaped the alienation that comes between ourselves, you and the rest of the world. Forgive us, Father. Teach us to risk being out of control in your presence. Help us to see your face of kindness directed towards us. Amen.

Read Romans 8:38-39. **Nothing** can separate us from God's love.

Thursday: Hymn Devotional

[How Deep the Father's Love for Us](#)

By Stuart Townend

How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure,

That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss –
The Father turns His face away,
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life –
I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything,
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,
His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart –
His wounds have paid my ransom.

Friday: Sabbath/Soul Rest

Take a few minutes— ideally at the beginning of your day, or whenever works best for you— and simply do nothing. Just be. Stand in silent love before God. Rest in the Father's deep love for you today. His love has no limits. Read once more Ephesians 3: 14-21 and soak up the reminder that you are deeply rooted and grounded in love.

Additional Resources:

Podcast: Unhurried Living Podcast- [episode 99 Rooted God-Given Identity](#)
[The Return of the Prodigal Son](#) by Henri Nouwen
[The Spirit of the Disciplines](#) by Dallas Willard