

SAVIOR SANCTIFIER HEALER COMING KING

Midterms

4 W E E K D E V O T I O N A L

BOX NO. _____

NAME _____

SUBJECT _____

CLASS _____

SECTION _____

INSTRUCTOR PASTOR DARRIL

DATE 09/24/22 - 10/16/22



Welcome to our CCC 2022 Spiritual Growth Campaign!

For the next 4 weeks, we are going to consider what it means for Jesus to be our Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and King. I'm excited for the spiritual growth that will happen for you as an individual and for us as a church as we "fix our eyes on Jesus" (Hebrews 12:1).

I believe the timing of this study is Providential. As we head into the midterm elections, we need the reminder that our hope is greater than one party or the other having a majority, and, even if we vote for different political candidates, as Christian people, we are united by and in Jesus. While we are in this study and for the months following, the loud message in our culture will be one of division along political party lines and derision for those who see it differently. All this noise will test our confidence in Jesus as our hope. It will test our willingness to see through American politics to Kingdom of Heaven realities. And, it will test our willingness to live out the Truth expressed in Ephesians 4 – that we are one body and we have one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all – regardless of our political persuasions.

As you engage with this material, I'm praying that, first, you hear from the Lord and, then, that you learn some things, are encouraged, challenged, provoked, and called forward in your commitment to Jesus and to His Church. And, I pray that as we grow in our conviction that Jesus alone is our Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and King, His Life and Light will shine through us so that our friends and neighbors will be drawn to Him and know Him as their Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and King, too!

Thank you for joining us! CCC is going to be a better, stronger church, and we will have a greater impact in our community and world because of your engagement.

Blessings,

Darril

Week 1

Jesus alone is our Savior. He rescues us **from** the penalty for our sins and the power that sin holds over us. He rescues us **to** eternal forgiveness, eternal life, becoming a new creation, and being adopted as children of God. As Christian people, we trust Him for salvation from and to these things that are spiritual and eternal and are most certainly beyond us. The test comes when we are facing circumstances that appear less eternal, less spiritual. Is Jesus our Savior just for the eternal, spiritual stuff and we have to save ourselves in every other way? Or, is Jesus our Savior no matter what we need to be rescued from? And, if He is a comprehensive Savior, who will we trust to rescue us in circumstances we might not be able to handle or that someone else is promising they can handle for us?



Trust in the Lord

Read Psalm 20

Psalm 20:7-8 "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm."

David, king of the ancient nation of Israel, wrote Psalm 20 approximately 1,000 years before Jesus was born. Before leading his army into battle, King David went to the temple to join in prayer and worship. This Psalm was probably written to guide the prayers and interactions for these pre-battle services. Verses 1-5 are the prayer of the people for their king and army. Verses 6-8 are the king's response to the prayers offered on his behalf and a spiritual leadership statement to his nation. Verse 9 is a summary statement and the "amen" to the prayers being offered by all who gathered for worship.

When ancient nations went to war, it was for the survival of their nation, their culture, their families... there was a lot on the line. Chariots and horses were the best weapons available. The army best equipped with chariots and horses usually won. Interestingly, the Lord had told the kings of Israel that they were not to acquire many horses (Deuteronomy 17:16); instead, they were to rely on Him, trusting His power, wisdom, timing, and methods to rescue them. Conventional wisdom, best practices, and human solutions will fail, and those who rely on them will fall. Salvation and rescue come only from the Lord, and those who trust Him will "rise up and stand firm!"

Our circumstances are always changing, but when there is a lot on the line, our human nature still drifts toward trusting in some version of "chariots and horses."

Study Questions

Short Answer:

1. What does your human nature tend to trust in for rescue or salvation instead of trusting in the Lord (i.e. money, my abilities or intellect, political party or leaders, medicine, etc.)?

2. What advice would you give to a Christian person who wants to fully engage in our American political process but only trust in the Lord as our Savior?

The Only Savior

Read Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew 1:21 "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

The name "Jesus" means "the Lord saves," and it was a common name when Jesus the Christ was born. At the time of His birth, the ancient nation of Israel was occupied by Roman forces and subject to Roman rule. One of the ways Jewish moms and dads expressed their desire for the Lord to rescue them was by naming their sons Jesus – Lord, save us!

While other parents named their sons "Jesus" as a prayer, God the Father named His Son Jesus because He was the answer to that prayer. At first, no one knew what it meant that this baby would be the Savior or that He would save people from their sins. His mother, Mary, treasured these things and pondered them in her heart (Luke 2:19) but she didn't understand them. It wasn't until after Jesus' resurrection (approximately 33 years later) that people began to understand. In a moment of divine clarity, the Apostle Peter declared, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Study Questions

Agree or Disagree:

I know what the Bible means when it says that Jesus saves people from their sins.

Agree

Disagree

Essay Questions:

1. If you lived in ancient Israel, in what ways might you see “save us from the Romans” and “save us from our sins” as the same prayer? In what ways might you see them as different?

2. If your party of choice is not in the majority after the elections, what hope is there for our country?

The Good News

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-22

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 "Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..."

The word "gospel" means "good news." While we may hear "good news" about a variety of things – our work performance, our kids, our sports teams, our health, etc. – there is only one "good news" that is of first importance – a "good news" that, when taken to heart, results in eternal salvation.

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

Each person, from God's perspective, is a sinner. We have ignored Him, dismissed Him, and rebelled against Him. We choose to be our own god instead of recognizing that He is our God. The penalty for sin is eternal death. Because we have sinned, we deserve to die both physically and spiritually. But Jesus died for our sins, in our place. His suffering and death were not circumstantial or accidental. God had declared this through His prophets for centuries before it happened, telling humankind that we need a Savior.

He was buried.

Jesus actually died. The people who executed Him were sure He was dead. His followers who buried Him were also sure He was dead. To this day, there remain theories advanced to dispute Jesus' actual death; however, everyone associated with Jesus at His crucifixion – friends and enemies – knew that He was dead, so they buried Him.

He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead is essential to this "good news" that results in our salvation. He not only saves us from eternal death, He also saves us to eternal life. He is victorious over death, and He gives His victory to those who receive it from Him.

Study Questions

Short Answer:

1. In your own words, what is "The Good News?"

2. What do you think it mean to "take your stand" on this gospel? Is this something that you are doing?

"The" Savior of "The World"

Read John 4:1-42

John 4:40-42 "So when the Samaritans came to [Jesus], they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, 'We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.'"

In Bible times, the Jewish people and the Samaritan people, for a variety of reasons, did not get along. Jesus' willingness to go through Samaria, talk to a Samaritan woman, and stay multiple nights in a Samaritan village was a strong rejection of the cultural norms and religious rules of both the Jewish and Samaritan people. His willingness to be with the Samaritan people resulted in their right understanding that Jesus is the (meaning, one and only) Savior of the world.

In John's gospel, "the world" can mean 1 of 3 things: 1) all of creation; 2) all the people; and, 3) all the people and our relationships, our cultures, our systems, etc. The Samaritans saying that Jesus is the Savior of "the world" carries the 3rd meaning. Jesus is not "just" the Savior of people who believe in Him, He also came to be the Rescuer and Redeemer of our cultural and societal brokenness.

Study Questions

Short Answer:

1. What did Jesus do that caused the Samaritan people to see Him as the Savior of the world?

2. Name 3 "saviors" you see our culture trusts to rescue and redeem "the world."

Essay Question:

Interact with this statement: Jesus is the one and only Savior for all expressions of our human brokenness, whether individual or societal.

Now and Not Yet

Read Philippians 3:7-4:1

Philippians 3:20,21 "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

The Apostle Paul was a Jewish man who had Roman citizenship. Because Rome was the most powerful nation at that time, Paul's Roman citizenship gave him rights and privileges throughout the known world. But he did not hold tightly to that Roman citizenship. Of greater value to him was his citizenship in heaven, given to him by his Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. His heavenly citizenship so outshined his Roman citizenship that the only flag he waved was the flag of heaven.

Those who have received this heavenly citizenship from Jesus have been rescued from our sin, from "the world," and from eternal death; and, we have been rescued to eternal life and an eternal home in heaven – a heavenly citizenship. All these things are true now for those who have "taken their stand" on the gospel, but the greatest and fullest expression of them is in our future. Because of this, we eagerly await our Savior from heaven who will come to us, bring our world under His control, and give us the fullest expression of our heavenly citizenship.

Study Questions

Multiple Choice:

Who is responsible for making what happens on earth to be like what happens in heaven?

- A. All people
- B. Christian people
- C. The Lord Jesus Christ
- D. None of the above

Short Answer:

In what ways is a heavenly citizenship of greater value than your earthly citizenship?

Essay Question:

What does it look like when you prioritize your heavenly citizenship over your earthly citizenship?

Week 2

Jesus alone is our Sanctifier. He is the One who separates us from our sin and dedicates us to God. Because He "sanctifies" us, we can become the people God created us to be and fulfill God's greater purpose for our lives. As Christian people, we believe that only Jesus transforms us into His image and only Jesus calls us into opportunities that make an eternal difference. The test comes every time we see a short-coming in our own life or the lives of other people. Does Jesus agree that this is a short-coming, or have I been convinced by someone else that this is a short-coming? Is Jesus really the only one who transforms us, or can we change ourselves? Is there something I can do to help or speed up the change He wants to bring? Am I being conformed to my own view of who I am, or am I being transformed into the image of Jesus?



Like Water into Wine

Read Romans 8, then Romans 12:1-2

Romans 12:1-2 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Christian people are always, whether we realize it or not, choosing to either be "conformed" or "transformed." Our natural bent is toward being "conformed," where we see and experience change in our life, but the change is dictated by what is going on in the world around us and results in our thinking and acting according to "the pattern of this world." We are like water poured into ice cube trays and put in the freezer – being shaped by and conformed to our natural environment but fundamentally still the same.

"Transformed" is the miraculous change that fundamentally shifts who we are – like water being turned into wine. This transformation is the work of Jesus in our lives as we allow His Holy Spirit to renew our minds. Through this renewal and transformation, we think, feel, act, and react more like Jesus and less like our natural self or our culture.

Study Questions

Multiple Choice:

Circle all that apply

The Spirit of God renews our minds through time and energy devoted to:

- A. News media
- B. The Bible
- C. Building Christian friendships
- D. Social media
- E. Prayer & Listening to God
- F. Serving those in need
- G. Talking politics

Compare and Contrast:

1. A person whose life is being conformed to the pattern of this world with a person whose life is being transformed by the renewing of their mind.

2. Who you were before you met Jesus with who you are today. *As you compare and contrast, are you more inclined to identify habits and behaviors or character qualities?*

Sanctification Prayer

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:12 and 5:23-24

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it."

The verses printed above are a prayer from the Apostle Paul for Christian people in the ancient city of Thessalonica. It is a prayer motivated by love for them and seeking God's best for their lives. To this end, he prays that God will sanctify them.

To "sanctify" someone is to set them apart for a particular purpose. When God sanctifies a person, He sets them apart from sin, the patterns of this world, and their pre-occupation with self; and, He dedicates them to Himself and to living out His kind of perfection, goodness, and love (which was perfectly modeled for us by Jesus).

God sanctifies every believer in Jesus. No one gets left out. When God sanctifies us, He does so "through and through." There is no part of our lives that He refuses or forgets or is powerless to sanctify and re-claim for Himself. We are powerless to sanctify any part of ourselves. No one and nothing else in all of creation have the ability or authority to sanctify us.

Study Questions

Fill In the Blank:

It is God's job to sanctify me. My job is to

It is also God's job to sanctify others. My job is to

Short Answer:

1. How would you reply to a Christian person who thinks the way forward for our country is making or enforcing laws that require people to act like Jesus did?

2. How would you reply to a Christian person who thinks that God doesn't care about the laws of our country?

God's Word Sanctifies Us

Read John 17:1-19

John 17:15-17 "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

John 17 records what is known as Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. He voiced this prayer just hours before going to the cross. In this prayer, Jesus makes two requests for His followers. The first request is in regard to their relationship to "the world." In our reading last week, we learned that "the world" means all of humankind, including the full expression of our brokenness both socially and culturally. Jesus prays for His followers to be protected from the evil one, who is in charge of "the world" (John 12:31), and for them to be sanctified, asking that they would be set apart from "the world" and set apart to God.

The "tool" God uses to sanctify Jesus' followers is His truth, the Truth which is given to us in God's Word, the Bible. We cannot be sanctified without on-going engagement with God's Word. A 2009 study by the center for Bible Engagement found that engaging with the Bible 1-3 times per week made little to no difference in a person's life, but 4 or more times per week made a drastic and positive difference. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to sanctify us so that we can live out the mission of God in our world.

https://bttbfiles.com/web/docs/cbe/Scientific_Evidence_for_the_Power_of_4.pdf

Study Questions

Thought Questions:

1. Do you believe there is Ultimate Truth, or that truth is relative or subjective? Why do you believe this?
2. What is/are your source(s) for truth? Why?
3. What are some ways a person who believes in Ultimate Truth might be tempted to think and act like truth is subjective?

Space for Reflection:

Sanctified and Unified

Read John 17:13-25

John 17:19-21 "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

In Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, His first request for His followers was that they would be sanctified. His second request was regarding His followers' relationships with each other. He prayed specifically that, regardless of what was going on in the world around them, they would be 'one' in the same way that Jesus and the Father are 'one.'

Jesus emphasized that He was sanctifying Himself, referring specifically to His death on the cross. While His entire life had been lived "set apart" for God's purpose, dying a sinner's death was the final and greatest expression of His obedience to His Father. The purpose of His death was so that His followers may be "truly sanctified." True sanctification leads to Christian unity no matter what is happening in the world around us.

Jesus' model for our unity is His relationship with the Father. While they are not the same person, they do have the same heart, mind, priorities, values, and mission. When we are being sanctified by Jesus, we are being drawn together in Christian unity.

Study Questions

Multiple Choice:

Circle all that apply

Being truly sanctified includes:

- A. Dying to self for the well-being of others
- B. Rejecting the ways of this world
- C. Insisting on my rights
- D. Emphasizing what we have in common
- E. Doing what it takes to win
- F. Living on Jesus' mission

Short Answer:

Do you see Christian people more, less, or the same amount of willing to die to self so they can be alive to God during election season compared to non-election season? Why do you think that is?

Sanctification as Art

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Sanctification is God's work in our lives. We do not and cannot sanctify ourselves. Other people cannot sanctify us, and we cannot sanctify anyone else. Only God sanctifies His people. Our role in sanctification is to surrender to and cooperate with His work in our lives and to encourage others as they surrender and cooperate.

In Ephesians 2, the Apostle Paul, declaring our salvation and sanctification to be God's work on our behalf, likens God to an artist – "for we are God's handiwork." This line was first written in ancient Greek, and the Greek word behind "handiwork" is *poiema*. *Poiema* is work that is produced by an artisan. Artisans don't mass produce; they don't rush. They are deliberate, intentional, and personally invested in their work. Artisans see their work as an extension of themselves.

God does not have a sanctification factory where He mass produces Christian people, and He does not have a sanctification system designed for maximum output. He sanctifies each one of us, making us into a unique expression of His image and prepared for a specific purpose that is ours alone to fulfill.

Study Questions

Short Answer:

1. How would you reply to a Christian person who thinks the way that God is sanctifying them is THE way God sanctifies all Christian people?

2. Would Christian unity be easier or more difficult if God had a "sanctification factory" or "sanctification system?" Why?



Week 3

Jesus alone is our Healer. He paid for our physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual healing when He suffered and died on the cross, and He uses His resurrection power to bring wholeness into our sickness, pain, and brokenness. As Christian people, we believe that Jesus will finally heal us when we die and go to heaven. The test comes every time we experience physical sickness, emotional pain, or relational brokenness. Can we trust Jesus for healing now, or do we have to look somewhere else? Will Jesus heal His people today or only when we get to heaven? What can I do to seek Jesus' healing now? What role does Jesus play and what role do people who have expertise play in healing? What role do I play in receiving the healing I need?

Only Jesus Heals

Read Isaiah 53:1-12

Isaiah 53:4-5 "Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."

Looking forward almost 750 years, God's prophet, Isaiah saw One appointed and anointed by God to be crushed and broken so that God's people could be healed. The apostle Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, watched Jesus cast out evil spirits and heal "all who were sick" in the region of Capernaum and declared, "This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah..." (Matthew 8:17).

Jesus alone is our Healer. Everywhere He went, He healed people who suffered, doing for them what no one else was able to do, taking on Himself what no one else was able to take from them. In His suffering and death on the cross, Jesus took the punishment that brings us peace. If we are to experience God's kind of healing for our pain and suffering – whether it is physical, emotional, spiritual, or relational – healing comes to us only through Jesus, who was broken so that we could be made whole.



Study Questions

Multiple Choice:

1. God's kind of healing (peace/shalom) includes:
- A. Completion
 - B. Health
 - C. Prosperity
 - D. Contentedness
 - E. Wholeness
 - F. Fulfillment
 - G. All of the above

Short Answer:

What would you say to a politician who claims that "My political party and I will bring our divided country back together"?

Jesus is Willing

Read Luke 5:12-32

Luke 5:12-13 "While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.' Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' And immediately the leprosy left him."

In Jesus' day, people with leprosy suffered in every way. They experienced the physical pain of a serious skin disease, which was contagious, so they suffered isolation from family and friends. There was the religious stigma of "unclean" so they were refused access to the religious life of their community, both the regular times and special occasions for worship. They experienced the humiliation of shouting "unclean, unclean" so that people knew to keep their distance. People with leprosy experienced a world that was unable to heal them and unwilling to touch them... until they encountered Jesus.

Jesus, anointed and appointed by God to take our pain and suffering, is willing to heal us. His statement, "I am willing," was made in the present tense, which emphasizes the on-going nature of His willingness. He was willing in that moment and remains willing through this one. Jesus is always willing to bring His healing power into our pain and suffering.

Study Questions

Thought Questions:

1. What role do you think the man with leprosy's humility (face to the ground, begged) played in his healing?

2. What role do you think his faith (Lord, if you are willing, you can...) played in his healing?

3. Do you think Jesus will force His kind of healing on people who do not want it? Why or why not?

Space for Reflection:

Still Just One Healer

Read Luke 4:1-30

Luke 4:18-21 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus was about 30 years old when He began to preach, perform miracles, and prepare leaders for taking His message to the ends of the earth. He spent most of His first 30 years in a little town in ancient Israel called Nazareth, which scholars estimate had a population of 300-500 people. The gospel of Luke records the first sermon Jesus preached in His hometown. He began His sermon by reading a well-known prophetic scripture that promised the coming of God's Messiah to rescue the people of Israel from their oppressors, and then, to His family and friends' delight, clearly declared Himself to be this Messiah. He finished His message with a not-so-well received reminder that He, their Messiah, did not come just for the Jewish people, but to rescue and heal Gentiles, too.

Ancient Nazareth and modern-day North America are drastically different places, but two things they have in common: first, hurting people – hurt by the brokenness of our world, by their own decisions, by the sins of others against them; and, second, people who see the hurting and want something different, something better for them. No matter how well-meaning, the efforts of this second group fall short unless they are done in the name and power of Jesus. Jesus, and Jesus alone, is God's anointed Healer and Helper for the hurting people in our world.

Study Questions

Short Answer:

1. What did Jesus proclaim that would be considered “good news” by the poor?

2. How would His proclamation be “freedom” for prisoners?

3. How does Jesus rescue the oppressed from their oppressors?

Compare and Contrast:

How is the proclamation of Jesus concerning the poor & oppressed similar to the platforms of our American political parties? How is it different?

Seeing Past our Differences

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

Ephesians 2:14-18 "For [Jesus] himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."

In the 1st century AD during the time the New Testament was written, the great divide in churches was ethnic. Jewish people and Gentile people did not know how to get along with each other. The Jews had a long heritage of being "the people of God." They were descendants of Abraham and other great men and women of faith, the 10 Commandments had been given to them, and God had made many promises of eternal blessings to them. The Gentiles had been pagan idol worshipers with no real framework or understanding of who God was or what it meant to worship Him, and most of the Jews' religious traditions held no meaning for them. Because of their different backgrounds and different ways of seeing the world, and because of their spiritual pride, these two groups of Christian people were hostile toward each other.

Jesus alone heals our broken relationships. He is the only hope for bringing divided people back together. In Jesus, each of us is reconciled to God. No matter how far apart we are from each other because of our different backgrounds or traditions or ways of seeing the world, we have been brought close together because Jesus brought each one of us close to God. The hostility that we naturally feel toward those who see things differently than we do has been put to death by Jesus in His death on the cross. That hostility is dead to us and we are dead to it. In Jesus, people who are very different have been united into a new kind of humanity – the Church – where we see beyond our differences and find peace and wholeness with each other in the One who has brought us together.

Study Questions

Opinion Questions:

1. Are you more like 1st century Jewish people with a long “faith” heritage and pedigree, or are you more like 1st century Gentile people who were relatively new to being in relationship with God? What are the advantages of that? Disadvantages?

2. In your opinion, rank the issues over which modern-day Christian people are hostile toward each other.

_____ Doctrinal issues (Triune nature of God, divinity of Jesus, authority of the Bible, etc.)

_____ Political party affiliation

_____ Race/ethnicity

_____ Views on “hot-button” social issues

_____ Other: _____

3. If the verses for today's devotion/reading were written to Christians in modern-day America, what might be different? What might be the same?

Jesus' Terms for our Healing

Read John 5:1-15

John 5:6 "When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, 'Do you want to get well?'"

James 5:14-16 "Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

Do you want to get well? It is an important question for people who need healing. Do you want to get well? And, if you do, a follow-up question: do you want Jesus to heal you? Because Jesus doesn't heal us on our terms. He heals us on His terms. If we want healing, Jesus' healing, we have to submit to Jesus' terms. What are these terms?

Faith. Jesus requires us to believe in Him as our healer. He isn't a back-up plan if the counselor, doctor, politician, etc. doesn't work out. Jesus often uses knowledgeable, skilled people to bring His healing, but He asks His people to see Him as our Healer and to come to Him for healing. Prayers prayed in faith result in the kind of healing Jesus alone brings.

Humility. We express humility by admitting our need. If we won't see our brokenness, we won't receive healing. We express humility by asking others for help. If we don't include our Christian friends and spiritual leaders, we miss the power of their prayers. We express humility in confessing our sins. Sin and sickness/brokenness often (but not always) go together. Sin has spiritual consequences that show up in our natural world, and the humility involved in confession of our sins to each other brings grace for forgiveness and healing. From beginning to end, the Bible tells us that God stands in the way of prideful people, but He gives grace to those who are humble.

Obedience. When you want to be healed by Jesus, you do what Jesus says to do. As you receive Jesus' healing, you live His way. When you've been healed by Jesus, you become an instrument of His healing to others.

Jesus alone is our healer. He offers His healing to us, but only on His terms.

Study Questions

Short Answer:

1. What are sick people supposed to do to receive healing?

2. Why is confession of sin connected to healing?

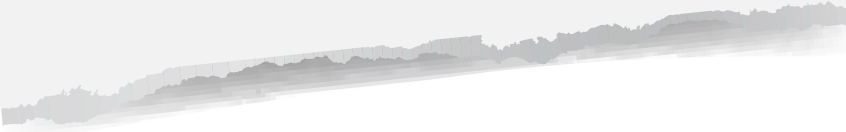
Essay Question:

Based on the above, offer an explanation for this statement: "Trust your care professionals, but trust in the Lord."



Week 4

Jesus alone is our King. His kingdom is a heavenly, eternal kingdom and He grants citizenship in His kingdom to those of us who believe in Him. As Christian people, we believe that Jesus is king of His own kingdom, and we understand that His kingdom has a different culture and values than the world we live in. But, we also have to live in this world, and we are citizens of our earthly countries as well as the kingdom of heaven. The test comes when our heavenly citizenship and our earthly citizenship are hard to reconcile. How do we live as citizens of heaven while we are on earth? Will the kingdom of heaven ever come to earth? Should we live with heavenly values and priorities even if they don't "work" in the kingdom of this world? How do we impact the kingdom of this world with the values and priorities of the kingdom of heaven? Who is responsible for the condition of this world, and who is responsible for its transformation?



Now. Please

Read Psalm 72 & Isaiah 9:1-7

Isaiah 9:6-7 "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this."

The prophet Isaiah predicted both the first coming of Jesus – “a child is born, a son is given,” which we celebrate at Christmas – and the still-future coming of Jesus where “the government will be on his shoulders.” At this future coming, Jesus will return to earth and establish His global and eternal kingdom, which will be characterized by peace, righteousness, and justice. Jesus’ kingdom will be established by the “zeal of the Lord Almighty.” It will not depend on human desire or effort. It will be inaugurated by the zeal and power of God.

Many theologians use the expression “now & not yet” to describe Jesus’ kingdom. While His kingdom has “not yet” been established in our world, we are able to experience His kingdom values and priorities “now,” even if they are not in their fullest expression. Those who get to participate in Jesus’ kingdom “now” are those who declare “Jesus alone is my Lord” and “My citizenship is in heaven.”


 **Study Questions**

Multiple Choice:

Jesus' future kingdom will be characterized by:

- A. Salvation
- B. Peace
- C. The Presence of the Lord
- D. Healing
- E. Joy
- F. Celebration
- G. Justice
- H. All of the above

Short Answer:

Do you agree with "now & not yet" as it is expressed above? Why or why not?

Thought Question:

What impact does declaring "Jesus alone is my Lord" and "My citizenship is in heaven" have on your view of and participation in our modern political process?

Winners and Losers

Read Psalm 2 & Philippians 2:1-11

Philippians 2:9-11 "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Because Jesus humbled Himself by becoming human and allowed Himself to be humiliated by dying on a cross, God the Father exalted Jesus by raising Him from the dead, restoring Him to the glory He had before the incarnation and installing Him as the Eternal King over all creation. He gave Jesus the highest position – seated at God's right hand. He gave Jesus the highest name – declaring Him to have the greatest dignity and worth. On a future day, Jesus' true greatness will be fully and finally revealed, and every created being, human and spiritual, will see Him, know Him, kneel before Him, and say about Him, "Jesus Christ is Lord."

Jesus won by losing. He gained everything by giving everything up. People can understand all this now because the New Testament explains it to us, but when it was happening, we thought Jesus was a loser, that God was against Him, that He deserved everything He was getting. We have a hard time seeing that God's kind of victory only comes by losing. Our natural bent is toward wanting our way, toward winning. But our Eternal King shows us that we receive only by letting go. We gain only by giving up. We win only by losing.

Study Questions

Compare and Contrast:

How are the statements "Jesus is Lord" and "Jesus is my Lord" the same? How are they different?

Short Answer:

1. Since God seeks hiding people, what are some things that must be true about Him?

2. What does "winning by losing" look like at your work? In your family? In our political process?

Your Kingdom Come

Read Revelation 11:15-19

Revelation 11:15 "The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.'"

The Apostle John received from God and recorded the apocalyptic vision we know as Revelation. God, through John, wanted His people to know things "that must soon take place" so that they will be informed and prepared (Revelation 1:1-3). Some of the Revelation reveals judgment God will pour out on the world for humankind's rejection of Jesus and His Lordship over them. The first 7 judgments are read from scrolls that have to be unsealed, the next 7 judgments are announced by the blowing of trumpets, and the last 7 judgments are poured out of bowls filled with God's wrath. As the trumpet judgments end and the bowl judgments begin, Jesus asserts His authority as Eternal King and takes His rightful place as King of our world. This is the "future coming" of Jesus that was prophesied in Isaiah 9:6 (see week 4 day 1).

We live in "the kingdom of the world." The Bible calls the kingdom of this world "the kingdom of darkness" (Colossians 1:13) and tells us that it is currently ruled by Satan (Luke 4:5,6; Ephesians 2:2). Those of us who have given our allegiance to Jesus as Lord live here as foreigners, as people who are in exile. This world is not our "home." The culture of the kingdom of this world is in conflict with the culture of the kingdom of heaven and we will not be "home" until our King comes, de-thrones the ruler of this world, and establishes His kingdom on earth.

Study Questions

Reflect:

1. In what ways do you feel at home living in the kingdom of this world. In what ways do you feel like a foreigner?

2. If Satan really is the ruler of the kingdom of this world, and his agenda is to steal, kill, and destroy, what hope is there?

The King's Commission

Read Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:4-11; Romans 10:14,15

Acts 1:6-8 "Then they gathered around him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'"

Jesus' first followers were convinced that He was their Messiah, their King. After His resurrection, they were waiting for and expecting Him to set up His kingdom, but it wasn't happening. After 40 days, they lost patience and worked up their courage to ask Him – is it now? If not, when? Instead of answering their question, Jesus gave them the Great Commission and promised to send the Holy Spirit. Then, He ascended back to heaven.

Jesus' followers, citizens of His heavenly kingdom, live as foreigners and exiles in the kingdom of this world for the purpose of being His witnesses. Those who acknowledge Jesus as their Lord have been given the privilege and power to live out and proclaim the Gospel – that, because of God's great love for us (Romans 5:8), Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3) and all who believe in Him will have eternal life (John 3:16). While we cannot know when Jesus will come back, He did tell us that His Gospel has to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth before He will return (Matthew 24:14).

Study Questions

Short Answer:

1. What role does the Holy Spirit play in Jesus' followers being His witnesses?

2. Beside being "His witnesses," what other "commissions" did Jesus give His followers?

3. Are there ways that being involved in our political process helps you fulfill the Great Commission? Are there ways that it distracts?

King and Judge

Read Matthew 16:13-27

Matthew 16:24-27 "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.'"

The American system of government has three branches: executive, judicial, and legislative. Americans have a say in who makes the laws, what laws get made, and who enforces those laws. We have checks and balances to keep each branch of government in its place and to limit abuse of power. Contrast our system with a kingdom. Kingdoms have a king. The king makes the laws. The king enforces the laws. All power is centralized in the king.

Jesus is King of the Kingdom of Heaven. When He returns to establish His Kingdom, He will return not just as the King but also as the Judge. Our future Judge has been very clear about the standard by which He will judge us.

Speaking to people who were already following Him, Jesus warned them that, if they were to continue following Him, He would lead them into what would look and feel like "losing," but in the end, they would receive eternal victory. If they refused to follow Him into "losing" and, instead, insisted on "winning," in the end, they would suffer eternal loss.

Study Questions

Short Answer:

1. Describe the governing structure of the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. Based on Jesus' teachings, can a person save their life and gain the whole world, and not forfeit their soul? Why or why not?

3. Based on Jesus' teachings, what is the most important thing for you during this election season?

NOTES
