

## Sermon Notes, May 14, 2017

### The Christian Lifestyle: Practicing the Presence of God, John 7:37-39, Romans 12:1-2

We're focusing on the Christian life and the Christian lifestyle—focusing on Christian growth. We're looking at how we grow as the Holy Spirit enables us to grow, and how we need to depend on the Holy Spirit. We recognize that there's this gap between these wonderful promises in the New Testament about the me that God wants to create, about life together with God, living deeply connected to God, and the reality of me as I currently exist...me right now, and there's this gap and it's sin.

Last week we looked at this promise of Jesus, where Jesus said, "Whoever trusts in Me, as the Scriptures say, out of your belly (*the very core of your existence*) will flow rivers of living water." What did Jesus really mean? What if Jesus meant what he said? What if the Holy Spirit is real and is just flowing like this river and available to us all the time? So, then my job isn't trying harder; in a sense my job is just don't quench the Holy Spirit, just find out what keeps me rooted in the Holy Spirit and make sure I don't grieve the Spirit, don't quench the Spirit.

Let's look at how the Spirit can flow in your mind and in my mind.

Okay, first two preliminary observations about how it is that we grow.

1. The first one is this, growth, disciples, are hand-crafted, not mass produced.

The key to growth is not treating every creature alike. It's finding the unique conditions that will enable you to grow.

We all want to grow toward the fruit of the Spirit...love, joy, peace and patience.

Jesus starts, "Anybody who is thirsty..." Then Jesus says, "Now you come to Me." A phrase that He would often use for that is "You abide in Me." He says this in John 15. "Remain (abide) in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine."

So then, I need to find...what are those things that draw life from Jesus? Then as I do that, then the flow of the Holy Spirit increases in my mind.

Discipleship, which is what we're talking about, is about building our lives around Jesus. He is our treasure and great reward. And if he really holds the center of gravity in our souls, then our thoughts, habits, schedules, and routines should orbit around him. But our discipleship is handcrafted. So, I need to find out what increases the flow of the Spirit, that presence of love and joy and peace in me.

2. Now the second preliminary observation, no matter how much you grow spiritually, you will always be you.

Listen. Before the Apostle Paul met Jesus, he was a brilliant, passionate, zealous man who persecuted people. After he met Jesus, guess what? He was a brilliant, passionate, zealous man who sacrificed himself in order to serve people and God.

You will always be you. That means God intends to redeem, to liberate, to set free—you, and as you grow spiritually will become more you. As you grow spiritually you will be more and more conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ. You're going to become more and more the you that He thought up—that He created. Part of what you need to do to grow spiritually is embrace that God made you to be you, yet to be renewed in Jesus Christ, and empowered by His Spirit.

Maybe the main place that this flow of the Holy Spirit will happen to liberate us is in our minds. How do we make our minds a place where the Holy Spirit is flowing freely?

3 observations. The first one this week. Listen to what Paul says,

"Don't be conformed," don't let the world squeeze you into its mold, "...but be transformed by the renewing of your minds."

1) The first one is this: I will have to learn to monitor my mind.

I will begin with God's help, becoming aware of what's the flow of thoughts, desires, perceptions, feelings that typify that pattern of my mind. I do this because we all have patterns of our mind. This is from Romans 8, "The mind controlled by the sinful nature is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace."

Paul is saying that with every thought, I can ask this question: Is it leading me toward life? If you are a Christian—a believer—a follower of Christ, the Bible says the Spirit of God lives in you, and if so, then the Spirit will be leading you toward thoughts of the fruit of the Spirit. With each thought, I can ask the question as part of monitoring my mind: Is it leading me toward life or is this thought leading me toward death?

So, it's not the circumstances, it's not the stuff that's going on around you or me, it's when we allow the Spirit to be at work with all of that, that the Spirit can begin to lead, as we bring our thoughts to God, toward life, then our thoughts can lead to love, peace, joy, truth, courage. Then when that happens, Paul says, "If you do these things the peace of God which transcends all understanding will keep your hearts and minds."