

February 2022

Thank you so much for your faithful support this month. We truly appreciate you, and the Lord will use your giving for the kingdom as we place it in His hands with faith. Here's where we are in....

In circumstances:

Rocio and I continue to work as a CNA and a pre-k teacher. February was a month we learned from. As I have opened up more and more to the Lord, he is working more and more areas in my life. As I was reading the story of Cain and Abel, He deeply touched my heart until tears because I recognized I was battling with anger because of difficult circumstances. The verse that stuck out to me was Gn. 4:7, "Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." As I thought about this verse, I realized that the reactions to circumstances or responsibilities can be positive or negative. But also that, our reactions to circumstances is a factor that affects the outcome of problems. Many times our reaction to hard circumstances can make the situations even worse. Anger can really damage and hurt others. I think of the Jn. 10:10 and the devil wanting to kill, steal, and destroy and Jesus, giving life in abundance; anger can destroy, and the devil knows that. The Lord tells in Eph. 4:26, "in your anger, don't sin." It's okay to get angry, but our reaction to the anger could be attitudes, cursing, etc. That is what sin would be. In trials, better reactions or helpful ones would be to praise the Lord, surrender to His will, trust Him in faith despite what we may see presently, and persevere for His glory.

This verse in Phil. 4:7-9 helps very much and almost gives a basis for a more optimistic/thankful view of life than a pessimistic one, "the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

I had immediately associated the word "rule over it" said to Cain with Gn. 1:26: Then God said, "Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals, and over all creatures that move along the ground." Again in Gn. 1:28, "Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over...."

I made the connection that God created us to rule over the earth; however, this anger wants to dominate and rule over us sometimes. It wants to have us. That is why the Lord says rule over it to Cain. We had been given the authority by God to rule the earth but couldn't even rule over our tempers, our hearts, our temptations (Gn. 3), etc. For that reason is why only in Christ's authority can we rule over it (the flesh/sinful nature/impulsiveness), only by the power of the Spirit and not will power.

Anger wanting to have us reminds me of Rom. 6:16-18, "Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves to the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience which leads to righteousness? But thanks to God that, you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

An excellent check to our Spirit's condition that the Lord also showed me was Gn. 32:22-31. If you feel hard-hearted towards the Lord or far away or dry, it could be a possibility it is due to bitterness or anger of life or towards the Lord or others. A summary is Jacob was about to meet his brother after 14 years, his brother whom he stole both the birthright and the blessing from Esau. He heard Esau was coming with 400 men, and Jacob thought he would kill him. Jacob wrestled with a man all night long, here's an important word, "when the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. The man said, "Let me go, it is daybreak. But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." So Jacob called this place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

A good prayer that makes this make sense is, "Lord, I open my mind, my heart, my Spirit, life, and soul to you. I feel like my heart has been hardened from so much bitterness, resentment, frustration, anger, disappointment, etc. I know that in prayer, many times you wait and don't respond immediately as with Jacob, but you do get me to the breaking point to see and help me see what's truly in my heart. And oh Lord, all that hardness, anger, and possibly not letting go of things are hammered on like a rock. As these things break within me, I experience healing; the hardness turns to tenderness, the hurts to healing, the anger to forgiveness, the ruthlessness to gentleness, the pride to humbleness, and resentment to love. So yes, Lord, come and break the hardness or bitterness in our hearts to heal us, oh Lord. Hosea 6:1, "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces, but he will heal us; he has injured us, but he will bind up our wounds."

In fundraising:

Very exciting things are beginning to happen in Stonebridge church in March and hopefully soon in RUMC (Roswell United Methodist Church) regarding fundraising! Please be praying for these. As of February, we have 62,510.00 with pledges and one-time gifts, and by God's grace, one more supporter joined! This is 59.4% of the target goal.

This month the Lord renewed the desire to pray to Him more. Prayer is really I feel praying his kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It is a way to tap into the Father's presence and reign in heaven, and pray for it in all the tangible areas of our lives on the earth. It is giving permission and asking God to get involved, and it is His work that always will make the eternal differences- so without it, we won't get very far. Though I realize we start not having a clue to pray or even say to God sometimes, he will teach us what to say if we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us. Prayer helps us walk in the Spirit and not in our own strength, which will most likely lead to more internal peace and less frustration. So I pray the Lord would pour His Spirit over the minds and hearts of those who he prompts to give and go ahead us and prepare the hearts of the Peruvians he wants us to encounter.

One verse that I enjoyed and made me think was Romans 11:18, "do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you." Also, along with this Romans 11:36, "For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen." These verses remind us that there is a circle that starts with God and ends with God; all things come from Him and are through Him(present) and for him (all things will come back to Him as we give in surrender what He has given us so He can use it for His glory.) It is indeed filling my heart to know all things are for Him, not for me or anyone else, and they all came from Him! Likewise, it is Christ who holds us together and all things, not us, yet sometimes we have the temptation to try. May we trust Him in placing everything in His mighty and sovereign hands as His reign brings eternity in our hearts.

Spiritually:

Another story that touched my heart and where there is a breaking point is in Gn. 21:8-20. This was when Ishmael, Hagar's son, kept mocking, and Sarai told Abraham, the father, to send Hagar and Ismael away. Abraham sent them away with provisions, and they wandered in the desert of Beersheba. When all the water in the water skin ran out -this is the heartbreaking part- Hagar placed her son about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there, she began to sob. God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar?" Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer."

Can you imagine having to place your boy about a bowshot length away, just waiting for him to die and not being able to see it? And begin to sob, feeling there is nothing else you can do, there is no help left, but the only option left is to not only die but allow your kid to die because of no water? It is as if she completely lost

all hope, but then the Lord heard her cries and the boy's cries and provided water for them in the middle of the desert!

In another verse in scripture (Gn. 16), Hagar describes the Lord as, "The God who sees me," for she said, "I have seen the One who sees me." The God who sees you, in all your struggling, in all your efforts, in all your pain, and inside the deepest places of your heart, sees you. Yes, the all-knowing, but also the all-powerful, the compassionate, the merciful, unconditionally loving kind God sees you and your situation and wants to intervene (he has not forgotten) because He sees us and will also be there to help! And nothing is in vain, but is designed for and planned for our good, for the Lord's purposes.

I won't expand much on this, but after Jacob meets Esau- Esau forgave Jacob. Jacob was expecting Esau to kill him and take everything he had, but here is Esau's response, "Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him, And they wept." Jacob asked Esau, "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me (gifts of appeasement right before the meeting of Esau from Jacob). For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably." Oh, that we know how merciful and compassionate God is because when we go wrong even as the prodigal son, we expect punishment or chastisement, but God offers us the complete opposite, unconditional love in full!

May this always be an encouragement to seek God's face today and more and more and grow a desire in your heart to go deeper and closer to Him!

