



Date

Jesus Do You Know Him

In Philippians 3:8, the Apostle Paul writes *“I consider everything a loss to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”*

Paul was a John 15:4 man, to him remaining in Christ and Christ remaining in him was all that he valued. I love the way Oswald Chambers describes this type of Christian. “Once we get intimate with Jesus, we are never lonely and we never lack for understanding or compassion. We can continually pour out our hearts to him without being perceived as overly emotional or pitiful. The Christian who is truly intimate with Jesus, will never draw attention to himself but will only show the evidence of a life where Jesus is completely in control.” This is the outcome of allowing Jesus to satisfy every need of our Life to its depths. The picture resulting from such a life, is that of the strong, calm, and balanced relationship that our Lord gives to those who are intimate with Him.

Read: Genesis 6:22-25

Are you truly in the vine? Do you know Jesus?

Are you seeking intimacy with Jesus?

Pray that as God prepares your heart to join Christ on mission and He will reveal something new and intimate about himself.

Date

Know the Vine

“I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener”. (John 15:1)

Until we understand the position of Christ, it is difficult for us to accept our position in Christ. This verse establishes God the father, as the gardener, having full power to grow the vine (Christ).

A gardener carefully chooses the fertile soil then prepares and makes it right before He plants. Then He plants only that which will give him joy and satisfaction. When the soil was ready He planted the vine (Christ) into human life.

Secondly the gardener begins to meticulously nurture, clean and feed the vine so that it will grow to produce as much fruit as possible.

The Gardener has all the power,

He tills the soil,

Plants the vine,

Waters, fertilizes, trims, and protects the vine.

Often I serve with great Christians on the mission field who are sincere, diligent, and wonderful leaders and when things don't go as they planned they become frustrated and disappointed forgetting God is in control.

Jesus (the true Vine) says (God is in control) “my father is the gardener”. If Jesus never takes control and simply remains obedient to the command of the father, even in the words he chooses, how much more should we who are His disciples remain flexible and obedient.

Read John 12: 44-50.

1. How does Christ being the true vine, and God being the gardener reflect upon your position in Christ?

Date

Fruity folks

“This is to my Father’s glory that you bear much fruit.” (John 15:8)

I find it impossible to listen to Jesus without seeing his humility. As long as Jesus walked and lived in his human body he was always a vessel, an instrument of His Father’s will, and his glory and purpose.

There is a fine line between bearing fruit and bearing much fruit. Many Christians bear fruit consistently and good fruit, fruit that lasts; however, somewhere in the equations of their life is self pride, and self will. Christ is our example and if anyone could have been proud of themselves it would have been Jesus, but he knew he was pursuing the purposes of His Father. That is the only way to bear much fruit.

In our world today, Billy Graham is a much fruit bearer. Why? What makes him a much fruit bearer, rather than a fruit bearer? In reading about Billy’s life I found he could have been anything he chose, a scholar, professor, a lawyer, or the pastor of any church he chose with any salary he asked and no doubt he would have been a fruit bearer at any of these. I discovered however, he chose to go where God sent him. Preach the one anointed message God gave him and most of all remain humbly the branch, controlled and fed by the vine.

Am I satisfied with being a fruit bearer or would I really like to know what bearing much fruit is all about?

My example of humility is...

Read 1 Cor 1:28-31 Where do I fit in this verse?

"THE POWER OF ONE"

"Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous." (Romans 5: 18-19)

"Oh, that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire upon my altar in vain!" (Malachi 1: 10a)

Last week we sat in another little country church in Guatemala, where, for different reasons, only the pastor showed up to worship God. One man. His wife has all but abandoned her faith. So many of his sons and other church members have turned their backs on their families and on the Lord. Things seem to be falling apart there as so many let their apathy and concerns for money outweigh their service to God. At times he is all alone in his unwavering faith in Jesus. As a little group of six of us began to sing and worship together there in Pavitzalan, Pastor Genero Lucas had a smile on his face. He joked about being all alone at times in his desire to walk in the ways of Christ. "Hasta la muerte!" he said. (Until the death!) "It goes farther than that", I assured him. "Hasta la Vida!" (To the life everlasting!)

Yes, one is truly a powerful number. I happen to know that God likes it a lot. Down through history, when His servants have stood alone, He has always smiled upon them. We see examples of God's working from the prophet Elijah (remember Mount Carmel?) to God's only Son, our Lord Jesus. Unlike ourselves, our Father has always known the true worth of the number "one". A faithful "one" beats 7 billion by more than a country mile. By one man (Adam) sin was brought into the world but by one Man, Jesus, our sin debt was settled so that we could be truly free. One is such a big number! Such a glorious number!

Perhaps God is calling you and me to re-learn our numbers today. For too long, we have been dazzled with the big numbers, so much so, that we have forgotten to notice the simple beauty of the little numbers. Perhaps the numbers in your life are closer to "one" and you have thought yourself a failure. Think again! "Oh that there were one...!" the Lord said to Malachi. The trick is to be that "one". What changes will God bring into this old world with time if one man or one woman will only hold the course and see their work to the end? (Hasta la muerte!) We don't know yet, do we? But, I believe that when it is all said and done, we are going to see that one is indeed a beautiful number, a truly extraordinary number...if it is wholly given over to God's purposes.

My challenge to you this week is to be the "One". Be the one to make a difference for God. Where He has placed you. With the tasks that He has given you. Be the One that He has made you to be and trust the resulting numbers to Him, and to His timing. Oh, at the changes that He could bring in our world...all from the power of a faithful "one." Do you believe this? This is not fuzzy math; this is the Gospel. Oh, a million is a good number, too, but the number one is so unique, so life-changing. There is truly nothing just like it. May God bless all His "ones" this week, in all the lonely places of the world where they are making a difference. An eternal difference... Press on!

Make a plan to make a difference this week _____

Why Worry

Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matt 6:34)

If we are not careful we can begin to put "feast or famine" ideas into practice in our day-to-day experiences. We can become so preoccupied or even worried about tomorrow that we begin to miss living today. Today is hard enough for most of us to work out. Who among us can carry today and tomorrow on his/her shoulders? A wise man once said that no one had ever succumbed from carrying today's weight on his shoulders...we are only brought down when we try to carry tomorrow's concerns as well as today's. Jesus put it another way in The Lord's Prayer. He said, "Give us this day our daily bread..." .

He knew that all we really need is "today's" portion. We don't need to overly concern ourselves with what we may or may not face tomorrow and we don't need to become obsessed with imagined troubles that may never even come. Instead, let us be thankful this day for God's provisions. His grace is sufficient for anything that may come our way today. And better yet, His grace will be sufficient for anything that will be our lot tomorrow.

Selah!

Are you one that worries about tomorrow so much that you miss living today? You will also miss opportunities to serve the Lord today if you are preoccupied with tomorrow.

How long has it been since you ask the Lord to take you and use you today?

Do not let the fact that you will be going on a mission trip in the near future keep you from doing what the Lord has planned for you to do today.

Be willing to do at home what you will be doing on the mission field, sharing the Love of Jesus with those you come in contact with.

"A Seat Not Taken"

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4: 14-16)

Some of you are reading this today and you have been hurt by someone who has denied you a place to sit...so to speak. Maybe someone has hurt you or treated you badly. Perhaps a spouse has been unfaithful to you or a child of yours acts like he is ashamed that you are his parent. Has a close friend let you down? Maybe you have been passed over by your boss for that promotion or for that new position. Or, could it be that you are simply ignored and that others don't see what is really inside of you. So much so that you feel that no one really knows you because others do not take the time to care enough to find out who you really are... **Whatever the cause**, you have heard that voice too, the one that has said to you, **"You can't sit here!"**

"There is no room..." And it hurts...

The book of Hebrews tells us that if we are in Christ, we are not facing our hurts or fighting our battles alone. We have one in heaven who is standing in the presence of God Almighty and who serves as our High Priest, making intercession for us. His name is **Jesus**. You see, he can sympathize with our hurts because **He has been hurt as well**. He knows what it is like to be rejected, despised and denied a seat at the table of humanity. And, because of all that He has suffered, he now **stands** at the throne of God so that we might be received with **mercy and grace**...and with help in all our times of need.

I believe that in heaven there is **a seat not taken**. It is not taken yet **because it has been reserved and specially kept just for you ...because you are in Christ Jesus!** You see, I believe that God is somewhat like the character "Jenny" in the movie "Forrest Gump", and that He is saying to each one of us, **"You can sit here beside me if you want to..."** Not only is He willing for us to sit with Him, He has actually written our names down and saved our place. And as long as Jesus stands as our intercessor, regardless of your past sins, hurts and scars, no one can ever say to you that the seat is taken! **It is your seat...with your name on it...** and it has been placed right beside a whole host of others from all time who have also been redeemed by the Lamb. These companions, unlike those that we have encountered here on earth, are eagerly looking forward to and are waiting just for **...YOU...** to one day come and fill your place!

(from an old English hymn entitled)
(Recently sung by the group "Selah")

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea
A great High Priest whose Name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart
No tongue can bid me thence depart!
"Before The Throne of God Above"

Yes, this world can be a cruel place. There is a lot of hurt and we do have a lot of scars. But, if ever you feel that you can not find a place to sit, be assured that there is a seat that is not taken, that is being reserved for you in a place that is not so very far away. I know this because it is **my Father's place** and He is waiting for you to one day **fill your seat there**. And when you do, all of the past hurts and sorrows of this life will finally be forgotten. **Only joy at being in the presence of Jesus will remain.**

Pray for God to use you to encourage someone today.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Spiritual attacks come in many forms but always attack our faith.

Read: (Ephesians 6:10-18)

List the six pieces of armor in the “Armor of God.”

In order to be effective on the battlefield a soldier must be both well trained and properly equipped. The warrior must have access, as well, to both a defensive stronghold and offensive weaponry. He or she must know the enemy and be alert for surprise attacks. Our spiritual battle with satan is no different. He is determined to destroy our faith by leading us into sin and discouragement, satan attacks with blatant temptation and deceptive lies. The Bible teaches that we must put on an impenetrable armor of defense and the best offensive weapons for this warfare are the *Word of God* and *prayer*.

(II Corinthians 11: 3-4) Describes one of satans subtle attacks upon our faith.

VS 3 But I fear that somehow you will be led away from your pure and simple devotion to Christ, just as Eve was led away by the serpent.

VS 4 You seem to believe whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach about a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed.

Paul is using his knowledge of satan’s tactics to encouraging believers not to be persuaded by things that weren’t directly connected to God.

What did Paul say was a true test of the truth?

How do we use the armor of God in another Christians Life?
