

How To Stay Spiritually Vibrant

November 12, 2023

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is titled "How to Stay Spiritually Vibrant." Thank you to Amy, Earl, Janet, Don, and Ed for being part of the video. The scripture reading is Psalm 100.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Good morning. We have a few important birthdays to mention. One is on the screen and that is Heather. But I think that is probably the less important birthday at that house of recent days. Is Ellis here? Ellis, did something important happen to you yesterday? [I had a birthday, and I got a cool toy!] Oh, you got a birthday and a cool toy. How old are you now, Ellis? [FIVE!] Whoa! Happy birthday, Ellis. Also, happy birthday, Heather, who is maybe a little less excited.

Some prayer requests. Lindsey and Daniel are moving. They are relocating from Houston to be closer to Daniel's family. Daniel is suffering from seizures related to his brain cancer. This is just devastating. I find this a heartbreaking thing. Adelaide is a very fresh baby and Daniel is in probably his last days. So, if we can continue to pray for them, for Lindsey as she goes through all of this, I can't even imagine. Helene's sister, Leya, speaking of things that I can't imagine, is in Halifax with her five younger children. Her oldest son is still in the refugee camp with her parents. We are continuing to pray for family reunification for that family. Let's go to God in prayer as we open.

Dear God, we thank you for the changing seasons. We thank you for the reminders of your renewal, for the seasons of winding down, and the seasons of winding up. God, we thank you for the rain that is here that will water our crops in the year to come and how that holds a future promise for us. God, we thank you for this place that we can come, that we can be together, that we can worship, that we can renew relationships. God, we pray that this week we will be your hands and feet. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Communion

The song we just sang certainly sets the scene for us meeting around the table this morning. When I survey the cross. Well, 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 3 through 9. I'd like to just kind of dissect these few verses as we meet around the table this morning. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

Well, first of all, mercy. We didn't deserve it. He sent His Son into the world. And I like the expression, "a new birth." We talk about coming out of the waters of baptism. A new birth. But when you're born, then you live. And so, in our new birth, we live with what? Hope. A living hope. Why? Because of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And we'll have a new inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. Like what happens to human beings in this world. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you. So, let's make this personal. Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice. Though now for a little while, you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. Again, we look forward to the hope, the living hope we have beyond this life. It's waiting in heaven for us. But you gotta go through a lot of

stuff here on earth before it becomes a reality. These trials have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith, see, it's our response to those trials. It's our response to those troubles, which inevitably will come. But if we have this living hope, then we have something to cling on to. The genuineness of your faith of greater worth and gold which perishes even though refined by fire, may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Again, let's make this personal. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. That's why we're here. And even though you do not see Him now, as we meet around this table, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, the joy of knowing we have this living hope. For you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. I like the adjective "receiving." It's a verb, I guess. Receiving. It's ongoing. We're receiving the result of our faith. We're living on this earth, and we have this living hope and it's... somewhere? But no, it's with us now. We are receiving the end result of your faith. And what is that? It's the salvation of our souls. So when I think about meeting around the table and the love that prompted God to send Jesus, His one and only Son, into this world, and the fact that it gives us this living hope, and as we partake each week of the bread and the fruit of the vine, we recognize and we're reminded of the price that has been paid and also of that living hope, which we have because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Let's pray together.

Our Father, we thank You for the love that prompted You to send Jesus into this world. We thank You for His concern for mankind. He was willing to leave heaven and to live amongst mankind to show us a better way and ultimately, though, Father, to go to the cross so that we might be reconciled to You for all eternity. For this, we thank You and we praise You. And as we meet now and partake of these emblems, will You help us to realize the great price that was paid for our salvation and the living hope we have because of it. In Jesus' name, amen.

(Music)

Reading

Psalm 100:1-5

Our reading this morning is Psalm 100. Shout for joy to the Lord all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His. We are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good, and His love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations.

(Music)

Sermon

Good morning to everyone. Thank you for being with us. We send out our prayers for Pam, who suffered a stroke this past week. She suffered a blood clot, but that blood clot has been removed. So, we pray for her total and complete healing.

I was thinking this past week about staying spiritually vibrant. How can a person do this all of their life? How do we stay spiritually vibrant? Our connection with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, but how do we still stay strong in that? Be overwhelmed by the preciousness, if you will, of God. So, I wrote down a couple of words, and I want to share them with you. They all start with the

word [letter] "L." How do we stay spiritually vibrant? Well, it's important to keep learning. It's important to keep loving. It's important to keep laughing. It's important to keep laboring. And it's important to keep leaving, leaving behind those things that have conquered us in the past. It's important to keep leaning on God. It's important to keep acknowledging God's love for us. And it is so important to keep giving thanks to our Lord. So how do we do this? How do we stay spiritually vibrant?

Even the most intellectual scholars of Scripture know that there is so much more that we can grasp in the Scripture. Even N.T. Wright suggests, after all the years of his brilliance, he still feels like he just has this much of understanding of all of the Scripture. If we could live multiple lifetimes, I don't think we would all fully grasp the truths of God.

So, I just want to talk about some of these things. Let's talk about the first thing. I think it's important to keep learning. In Colossians chapter 2, in verse 6 it says, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him. Continue to live. Keep pushing toward that. Rooted and built up in him. Strengthened in the faith and overflowing with thankfulness." Let's call it this way. Live baptismal lives. Many of us remember when we were baptized. It was amazing. It was this feeling of relief and cleansing and salvation. How wonderful that was. Can we reclaim that feeling? The feelings of vibrancy in God, that we keep knowing Christ, that we keep being strengthened in Christ, that we are baptismal people, understanding that God loves us and has poured out his life into us. And as Jesus died and buried and rose again, we too do the same. We live a new life. And, excuse me, it's important to keep loving. The greatest commandment of all, love the Lord your God with all of your soul, might with all your strength, because God loves us, and he pours out his love. Doesn't give us little drips and drabs. He pours it out to us. If we could just remember when difficult times come along, God hasn't abandoned us. In fact, he's pouring it out, pouring it out into our lives. It's important to keep loving, because God loves us.

And, uniquely as Christians, I think, is to keep laughing. The joy of the Lord. Hebrews chapter one, God has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. So, I picture this in the first century. There was a lot of dust and so forth, and what their clothing would be like. I'm not so sure, but I think it would be kind of covered in dust all the time. But here is this cleansing of it all. It's important to keep loving, because God loves us. It's important to keep the full of the Spirit. It's important that we understand this cleansing, clothing us in his love and joy. And, uniquely, it's important, some people think this is strange, to keep laughing. Enjoy. Enjoy the relationship you have with Jesus. Have you ever stopped to think that God chuckles? That God laughs? That Jesus laughs? That the Holy Spirit laughs? I picture in my mind God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit chatting. Somebody making a humorous comment, laughing together. Can we think of that? Can we think? Is that improper? The laughter that we receive comes from him. The love comes to us from him. It's marvelous. It's important to keep loving, and the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart.

And then the Apostle says, and the Apostle Paul, and you'd understand this because this is what he did, it's important to keep laboring. Don't give up. And there were so many times when the Apostle Paul would go to a certain city, a certain town, and preach the gospel, and he was shunned. He was pushed away. But he never gave up. And he'd come across to another village, and all of a sudden people started to listen, and they paid attention. And maybe you've had friends in your life where they just said, "Well, I'm glad that you're a Christian. That's really good. That's not for me, but it's good." But maybe your lifestyle is such that they watch, and they go, "Wow, this is unique. This is different. Maybe

this is one of the ways I should be living, so that I'm not so despondent and in fear all of my life." And so, because of that, keep laughing, keep laboring. The Apostle Paul said, "We worked night and day, laboring and toiling, so we wouldn't be a burden to you."

So, I look back, and the culture of the churches of Christ have changed somewhat over the years, but there was a time for many, many, many years where churches would host a minister coming to preach for a series of meetings. They were called gospel meetings. How many remember going to gospel meetings? Well, just about everyone. And so, for many, many years, I would be preaching in gospel meetings. Some unique little places like Greersville, different places in the middle of nowhere. Greersville is a thumbs up for sure. Several times there have been invitations there. They would stuff me with food, but lovely people, wonderful people, entertaining people, lots of different places out west, beautiful places like in Calgary and BC and so forth, sometimes out in Nova Scotia. These were gospel meetings where people would come together, and they'd focus on a certain passage of scripture or certain themes all throughout. And it was a wonderful time, but it wore me out, but it was a wonderful, wonderful time of sharing. And this, when you notice, is what Jesus did. The word gospel meeting wasn't what Jesus ever used, but that's what he did. He was a walker. It's called a peripatetic preacher. He would walk. He would just go into a village, go into a town and share gospel meetings. Years ago, when people saw a great big tent going up, they knew what was happening. There's going to be maybe a little bit of music, but there's going to be some dynamic preaching going on. The culture has changed. But what's important is that we continue loving the Lord, sharing the Lord Jesus Christ, sharing the Holy Spirit, and understanding the word of God.

And then think of this, it's important, and listen, to keep leaving. Here's what I mean. To leave behind. To leave behind those old ways of selfishness. Not arguing with Scripture but allowing the Scripture to teach us. It's beautiful to understand the word of the Lord for the very best of our ability. And it says, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." And oftentimes at the end of a sermon many years ago, there would be an invitation for people to come forward and to be baptized into Christ Jesus. Many of us remember those days when you were deciding, and maybe some of you can remember your baptism. I remember speaking to my father, who was a minister at that time, and I wanted to be baptized. And he said, "Well, you've learned enough, you know enough. We'll go ahead and do that." And I remember thinking right up until the very last moment, "Am I really going to do this? Am I really going to do this?" And all of a sudden, my fingers were holding on to the pew, and it just felt like, "Yeah, you're going to do this." And so, my hands released, and I walked.

Now, that's not the only way someone could be baptized by doing it that way, but that's the way it was done. That was the culture of where I was, where you came forward to be baptized, and you were baptized in the baptistry and so forth. But many times, people were baptized in streams. At Camp Omagh, before there was a swimming pool, there was a stream down below that many people were baptized down in that stream. My mother was baptized down in that stream. It's the uniqueness of it all. And to not forget the uniqueness that we have still today. And so, we give thanks to the Lord. That as culture changes, His love hasn't changed. And that as culture changes, Jesus hasn't changed. And that as culture changes, the Holy Spirit hasn't changed. And as culture changes, the Scripture hasn't changed. Two thousand years ago, it was amazing in the Scriptures. Two thousand years later today, it's just as amazing. If we lived multiple lifetimes, I'm not sure we'll really grasp all of the Scriptures. So, these words are so profound. Worship the Lord always with gladness. Come before the Lord with joyful

songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is God who made us. And we are His. Can you feel that? We are His people. We are the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Even before we get here, we give thanks to the Lord. Give thanks to Him. Praise His name. For the Lord is good. And His love endures forever. His faithfulness continues throughout all generations. So, as we go through so many of these Scriptures, we understand how important it is to never give up, to keep learning, to keep growing, and to keep giving thanks.

So let me conclude with somewhat of a longer conclusion than I would normally give. I want to read some Scriptures that deal specifically with giving thanks. We receive the thanks of God. Can we pour out thanks to Him? So let me just share with you some wonderful Scriptures that I think are pretty profound. Give thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. He has qualified us. He has poured it out to us. He is welcoming us. And then Jesus Himself says, "So then just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." And I would challenge all of us, maybe even today, to just be by yourself and just start thanking God for what you want to thank God for. There is just so much. It's one thing to understand it. It's another thing to do it. I think it's important. God hears, hears what I want to say thank you to. It might take a while because we give thanks for what He has done for us. So, Jesus said, "Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted, built up, overflowing with thankfulness." We give thanks to the Holy Spirit, be filled with the Holy Spirit, sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we give thanks personally. We give thanks to our family. Sing to God. Sing praise His name. Extol Him who rides on the clouds. His name is the Lord. Rejoice before Him. He is a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows is God in His holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families. Give thanks for friends. The Bible says a friend loves at all times and the brother or sister is born for adversity, but they're not going to run. Jesus said, "I'll never leave you. I'll never forget you." A man has many companions, and they may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. And that's Jesus.

We give thanks to our church leaders, to our church elders. Scripture says, "Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that confess His name." We have precious and wonderful elders in our church. We have wonderful workers in our church who pray for each other and who pray for us.

And then the Bible talks about other things, about giving thanks. They presented these men before the apostles. They prayed and laid hands on them so that the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. More and more people coming to the Lord. And then this, for all of us, we give thanks for our church family. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of the one body, you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, to the Father, give thanks to Him. And then in conclusion, my personal words. How can I thank God enough for you? In return for all of the joy that I have in the presence of our God because of you. And I thank my God every time I remember you in all

my prayers. I'm so grateful for our church and how people come together so quickly and so easily when there are difficult times. Someone's passed away, someone's ill. In many, many ways, a church comes together, not just with preaching and teaching, but we come together as a family of God, loving one another. And welcoming more to this wonderful family of God that exists in this place, I thank God for you. Amen.

[music]

Closing Prayer

Thank you for coming today and gathering with us. It's an encouragement to all of us to be together, to have communion, to sing, to pray, and to hear a marvelous lesson from Don. I'm going to ask you to stand, and we're going to sing our final prayer. We opened with this, and we're going to close with it.

[music]

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him all creatures here below.

Praise Him above ye heavenly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Amen.

[music]

Have a good week.

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