

Sunday Scriptures and Study for April 26, 2020

When I was growing up at Cal Farley's Boys Ranch we lived five miles from the town of Boys Ranch itself on what was called Magenta Farms. That's where I learned to ride bulls and horses. One of the amazing things that Boys Ranch did was to allow any boy who had graduated from the ranch but was having trouble or needed a job, to come back and work for them to help them get on their feet.

There was two boys that graduated from the ranch that made their career as ranch hands and would day work around the Panhandle area. Nearly every year they would come back to the ranch to work for a few months. They would live at the Magenta Farms bunk house. Their names were David Ross and Robbie Seals. I liked both of them and when they were around it lightened the work load for my brothers and I. We would also cutup a lot. David was quiet but a hard worker with a dry sense of humor, while Robbie was wilder than a jack rabbit.

Robbie never stayed more than a month or so at a time. Whenever he got some money saved up he was gone. Robbie wasn't the best influence for us either, although he was fun to be around, he usually got us in trouble or was teaching us things we didn't need to know. David was older and more of the wise old cowboy type.

After I graduated from High School at Boys Ranch we moved to Dumas, Texas. I went on to college, got married to Betty and we started a family. I began my career as a County Extension Agent in Cameron, Texas and after four years move to Clarendon, Texas.

Occasionally, I would hear about David and what ranch he was working at but I had not heard about Robbie for years. I often wondered what happen to him and even if he was still alive. When we moved to Clarendon, Texas I found out what Robbie was doing. To my surprise, I was driving down the street one day and as I went by a little Baptist church I noticed on the sign it said, "Pastor – Robbie Seals." Wow! I couldn't believe it. But it was him. He was the pastor in that little Baptist church. I stopped and went in and had a nice visit with him. My thought was, if God could change Robbie and use him, he could use me or anybody.

In the Bible, who was the first persons God used to show his greatness, care and compassion expressed in and through them for the world to see the living God?

1) Start with prayer (Use your own words or the prayer below to help you get started)

Holy Spirit we invite you to be with us this morning again as we worship, pray and hear the Word of God. Spirit of truth bring new revelation to us this morning from our time of worship, prayer and hearing the Word. May we be refreshed, encouraged and strengthened by you this morning and may we know the presence of Christ's peace this morning. Give our nation a hunger and thirst for truth and righteousness and empower the church for Christ's honor and glory.

Father consume us with your love. Give us a Holy passion for you and a Holy Fire for the things of God. Cause us to love you more and love others the way you do. May we have the mind of Christ, the heart of Christ, the eyes of Christ, the voice of Christ, and the love of Christ, in his precious name we pray. Amen.

2) Listen to or sing your favorite hymn or song. Here are a few examples:

- a. Worthy Is The Lamb
- b. Give Thanks
- c. Victory In Jesus
- d. Be Thou My Vision
- e. Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated To Thee
- f. Revelation Song

3) Follow this with the tithes/offerings

Tithes and offerings to God are an act of our worship and recognition of who is truly the creator and provider of all things. Thank you Father for all that you give us and for every spiritual gift. We offer ourselves as living sacrifices for your pleasure and purposes. We have been blessed, so may we be a blessing to others as you bring them into our lives. All praise, honor, and glory be yours. Amen.

(Note to the church: Again, Thank you so much for your faithfulness in your tithes and offerings. Many of you have brought them by or mailed them to the church.)

4) Psalter Reading

Psalm 143 (Read from your Bible)

Read Psalm 143 and make it your own prayer before you read scripture and study the next section. Use the Psalm to lead your prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart up to the truths of God's Word.

5) Scripture Reading and study. What does it look like to be used by God?

Genesis 23:1-6 (NIV)

¹ Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old.

² She died at Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her.

³ Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites. He said,

⁴ "I am an alien and a stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead."

⁵ The Hittites replied to Abraham,

⁶ "Sir, listen to us. **You are a mighty prince among us.** Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead."

In Genesis 12:2 God told Abraham (Abram) that he would be blessed to be a blessing. God's hand and favor was upon him because Abraham believed what God said to him. In the scriptures above I want to focus on just one part:

⁶ "Sir, listen to us. **You are a mighty prince among us.** Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs.

Ray Vander Laan makes an interesting commentary on this one scripture. Even though this set of scriptures is talking about the death of Sarah, this one verse points out how the Hittites viewed Abraham. In verse 4, Abraham said he was a stranger among the Hittites. However, they called him a "mighty prince." Abraham, Sarah and family had left their home and had traveled many miles following the God of the Bible. They were living among a pagan culture. They were the only believers there. They were living such distinctive, godly lives that the Hittites noticed it and noticed the God they served. It is one of the first examples in the Bible of God's people living out the mission of God so that people would know who God is and what he is like.

God could have made himself known in any number of amazing ways, however he chooses ordinary human partners like Abraham and Sarah. He also chooses us. What should it look like to be a partner with God?

It is rather simple as taught in scripture. Be like Jesus or a better way of looking at it is to let Jesus live through us, so others see him in us.

James 1:25 (NIV)

²⁵ But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.

Have you ever looked down in a perfectly calm pool of water to see your reflection? Same as looking into a mirror. James is talking about a person looking into the mirror of the Bible. Not just a glance or flipping pages. But really looking at it! Standing in front of Psalm 51 or Psalm 22. Psalm 51 is about forgiveness and Psalm 22 is a description of Jesus' death on the cross hundreds of years before it happened. Or, what about Galatians 2:20? My favorite verse and one I have memorized. I encourage you to look it up and stand in front of it for a few minutes reflecting on what it means to you.

The Bible not only speaks to us but it also reflects on how we are living. James is talking about a person who each day opens the Word and knows it well enough to be guided by it and knows it well enough to know when their reflection is not what it is supposed to be. The promise that James gives is that the man (person) that really reads it and then does what they have heard or read will be blessed. Remember in Jesus' day few people had access to the word of God so it had to be read aloud by priest for people to hear it. We have the best of both worlds we get to hear it and read it for ourselves anytime we want. We don't really have any excuses, do we?

We come to God's Word, Jesus just as we are. We let the Word change us and prompt us to act in a way that reflects Jesus more and more. It is a blessing first to be a part of God's family and then even more as we become the hands and feet of Jesus in a hurting world.

Galatians 6:7-10 (NIV)

⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

⁸ The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Another way to look at this from a mirror standpoint is to think how the principle of sowing and reaping works. If you were to stand in front of the mirror and smile, what would you see? Now if you make an angry face, what do you see? Now open your hand up as if you are giving something to someone. Stretch out your hand and close it as if taking something away.

What's the point? Getting this point is critical to understanding what Jesus did and what he expects us to do. When you smile in front of a mirror what did you see? Your reflection of a man/women smiling back. And when you glared at it angrily that person glared back the same way. When you hold your hand out in a giving gesture, the hand in the mirror is doing the same. And, when you reach out as to take something away the hand in the mirror is reaching as to take something away from you. The principle of sowing and reaping.

Jesus set the example of giving up his life for us only to receive it back and open the door up for us to do the same. We are not called to physically die but to become living sacrifices on Jesus' behalf (Romans 12:1). When we give up our life of worldly living we receive it back to live for Jesus in this world and into eternity. But, there is more.

If we bless others, we are blessed. If we withhold blessings, our blessing are withheld. As we do, so it will be done to us. If we live by taking, it will eventually be taken from us. If we live a life of giving it will, in the end, be given to us.

If we condemn others, we will be condemned by others. Forgive others and God will forgive us. Judge others and we will be judged by others. Live with a closed hand and His hand will be closed to us. Live with an open hand and His hand will be opened to us. What we give will be given back. What we take will be taken back. I hope by now you get the picture or the reflection.

Here are some examples from Proverbs:

Proverbs 16:3 (NIV)

³ Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

Proverbs 15:18-19 (NIV)

¹⁸ A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.

¹⁹ The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway.

Proverbs 15:23 (NIV)

²³ A man finds joy in giving an apt reply-- and how good is a timely word!

Proverbs 16:24 (NIV)

²⁴ Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Proverbs 16:28-29 (NIV)

²⁸ A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.

²⁹ A violent man entices his neighbor and leads him down a path that is not good.

Proverbs 19:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.

Proverbs 17:9 (NIV)

⁹ He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

We can reflect Christ living in us by what we do or don't do. Just like the Hittites saw how Abraham and Sarah lived, so the world sees how we live and who we live for. Therefore, we want to live a life of love, of giving, of blessing, of compassion, of forgiveness, of mercy, of grace and of sacrifice. Then we will receive the same back. Better yet, we will bless others and honor God our Father and Christ our Savior. Today make it your goal to treat others the very way you want to be treated.

Let's be reminded every time we look in a mirror of the principle of sowing and reaping and think about how we are living. May it remind us to measure our life in the mirror of God's Word and not be afraid to reflect on what is really going on in our hearts. The key is that when we see, we make the needed adjustments. May you be empowered by God's indwelling Spirit to live as Christ lived, love as Christ loved, give as Christ gave, speak as Christ spoke, forgive as Christ forgave, encourage as Christ encouraged, pray as Christ prayed, shine as Christ shined.

Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

6) Prayer Concerns: Julia Putnam, Ann Keefer, Judy Draper, Brenda Stam, Ellis Hise, Jason Beard, those suffering from the effects of the coronavirus, our nations' leaders, and that the church would rise up in revival and be used powerfully by God to bring salvation and healing to our land.

Thursday, May 7 is the National Day of Prayer. The Ministerial Alliance has planned for all the churches to open their doors from 8:00 to 5:00 for people to come and go at their convenience to pray for the nation. It will give us a chance to get back in the church and for us to come together as a community to pray while still social distancing. Depending on what the governor says Monday, there is a chance we might get to be back in church on Sunday, May 5. Please do not announce that yet. Let's wait until Monday to see what he says.

For now let's focus on the National Day of Prayer as our first opportunity to come back to church. We can expect there will be some restrictions on how many can be in the church at one time praying and self-distancing will likely still be in place. I will sent more information after Monday. I will also ask the Worship Committee to make plans to serve communion to each person that comes that day to pray.

Use the scriptures and prayer below to guide your prayers for this morning:

Hebrews 10:19-22 (NIV)

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,

²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Ephesians 2:18-22 (NIV)

¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

1 Peter 2:4-5 (NIV)

⁴ *As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--*

⁵ *you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

Thank you Jesus that we have access to the Father by your Spirit and the blood you shed on the cross. Thank you Father that we can enter into your presence and a relationship with you. Thank you that we are adopted into the family and are members of God's household with Christ being the foundation's cornerstone. Father bring your church back together in this nation to once again become the dwelling in which we encounter your holy presence. Build us, your living stones, into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood that we may be spiritual sacrifices acceptable to you Almighty God through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

7) End with **The Lord's Prayer** and prayer for others/nation and a hymn or song. As you pray for others ask this one thing: Pray for a demonstration of God's Holy Spirit in their lives.

As a reminder, there is a reason why we can start our prayer with "Our Father." We are all God's creation, but only those who have been born again in Christ have been adopted into a new family. God's family. No longer does our sin stand between us and a holy God. We have been washed clean by the blood of Jesus. That opens the door to an intimate prayer life and relationship with the Father. We are the Almighty's children and we can enter the throne room of grace with boldness even though he is Almighty God, because he also is our Father and Christ made a way. Amen!

8) **Benediction: 2 Corinthians 13:14 (NKJV)** ¹⁴ *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.*

Pastor Tim Trimble