

5-10-26

Psalm 153

Psalm 122

This morning, you are about to get a brief tour of your pastor's brain and hopefully gain some insight into how it functions. For some of you, this is a very scary proposition, and I can already see some of you folks searching for the nearest exit! I can't rightly say I blame you.

But if you can bear with me for just a few minutes, I assure you my intentions are good. My logic? Maybe not as good.

Actually, I'm very happy that Diedra Haupt spoke last week because not only was her message informative and challenging, but it was an example of an excellent presentation. And what I mean by this is that it had a logical flow to it: Her message had ...

an overarching theme

three major points to support the theme - analogous to the three-legged stool,

and then she listed and explained five different principles to help us as a church apply our newly acquired knowledge. By the way, the application of knowledge is commonly referred to as wisdom.

If I were a judge of the oratorical arts, I would have given her high marks. But I'm not. I'm just a local preacher, so instead, I'll just steal her material!

Just kidding!

You know I wouldn't do that and I can't do that because what she conveyed to us came from her heart and from the calling God has

placed on her life, so it's personal and non-reproducible in the sense that if someone else tried to deliver that same message, it would be altogether different and far less impactful.

So, what I am going to do instead though, is steal her 1 – 3 - 5 outline pattern she used in her delivery and use it in my message except with a slight twist. I'm just going to go a little dyslexic on you for a moment. I'm going to use a 1 – 5 – 3 patterned outline in which I have ...

1 over-arching theme

5 major headings ... and

3, I guess you could say, bullet points or sub-points under the headings.

Oh, by the way, I am in no way attempting to make fun of people who may have dyslexia. Dyslexia actually runs in my own family. My mom and one of my brothers struggled with it. I myself would have struggled with it more had I not made it a point to write in my "dairy" every day!

Anyway, here's my one over-arching theme, premise or thesis or whatever you want to call it:

God is worthy of all creation's worship and praise which includes all the worship mankind can conceivably muster. Unfortunately, not all of humanity worships God. Countless millions have failed to see the glory of God in the face of Christ. Therefore, God is not receiving all the worship due his holy name.

This current situation is unacceptable. It's tantamount to stealing from God and it dishonors Him.

Can you imagine how much more praise God would receive if all those who have turned away from Him all of a sudden repented, turned to Him, and worshipped Him for who he is and what He's done? Wouldn't this be so amazing and incredible - and right?

It's up to his church to change this situation.

As Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 1: 11 - 12 *"In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be **for the praise of his glory.**"*

Did you hear that little phrase in there right at the end of this section of scripture? *"for the praise of his glory"*?

Let us not overlook that which should have such profound meaning in our world – that coming to Christ, that receiving his offer of salvation, that believing in the gospel message not only brings hope and life and purpose to our individual lives, but it brings glory and honor to God because in coming to Him by faith it means we recognize, acknowledge, and proclaim his greatness, his love and his immeasurable majesty and henceforth, brings glory to his name – the Name that is above every name.

And it's only right that God should be recognized and praised and adored for who he is and what he's done. Because no one can be or do what He has done and is doing.

Now some might argue that in these two verses Paul is simply referring to the first Jews who believed in Christ - that their conversions were for the praise of God's glory. And they'd be absolutely right.

But Paul goes on in his address to the Ephesian church writing, *"And you were also included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glorious grace."*

So, in essence, when Paul writes to the first century Christians – both Jews and Gentiles - concerning their belief in Christ and how it brings glory and praise to God, he's also writing about you and me, 21st century Christians, who have received the same salvation, and in doing so, are also called to glorify God.

Different century, same mission.

But more of this sort of stuff needs to happen because as long as there are people who have yet to believe, then there's praise and glory that is being left on the shelf and is not yet being directed to God, and this is a shame because the psalmist writes in Psalm 150, *"let everything that has breath praise the Lord."*

Are you with me so far?

As long as there are people who are inhaling and exhaling God's air and yet are not acknowledging his goodness and mercy and not coming to him in humility and repentance, then our job as a church is far from complete.

This is about as simplistic as I can put it, and it's my overarching theme of my message this morning.

If there are people on this earth not worshipping the one true God of the Bible and who are failing to recognize his One and Only perfect and holy Son Jesus, then God is getting cheated out of what he rightly deserves.

Do you like getting cheated out of something that you know is rightly yours? My guess is no.

All praise and glory and honor are due his name just as John's revelation records when he witnesses heavenly beings saying even at this very moment in heaven:

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

living a life that acknowledges and seeks to reflect the goodness of God is God's will for his creation of which you and I are apart. There can be no higher calling, because in doing so, we're fulfilling God's intended purpose - proclaiming God's greatness and majesty:

"Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"
Psalm 8.

So, here's my first point in my 1 – 5 – 3 outline:

God needs more worshippers – those who have received his offer of salvation - and worshippers are to gather together regularly to worship God. And the primary way we do this is to gather on Sunday mornings at a place of worship such as this church building which

we presently find ourselves where we proclaim God's greatness through the reading of his word, through preaching and praying and lifting our voices in song and exhorting each other to live for him.

Now look around you.

Look at the empty pews on your left and right.

This is Exhibit A in defense of my thesis.

Could not Almont use more worshippers of God?

Of course, the answer is yes. If there are people outside this building who are in their homes or in stores or in their cars going who knows where on Sunday morning during this worship hour, then God is getting cheated out of what he rightly deserves: Our full attention focused on him to give him glory, honor and praise.

Now I don't say this to guilt trip people or to put more bodies in the pews so we can have a larger offering or so that we can say to another church, look at us, we know how to do ministry. I say it simply because God is not just worthy of all our praise, He's worthy of everyone's praise.

And we as a church are called to do something about it.

But what?

Maybe the more accurate question for us is ...

How do we get more worshippers into church on Sunday?

Again, not to say ... look at us, our church is full, but to know that God is getting more of the worship He rightly deserves.

There. I've completed the 1 of my 1 – 5 – 3 outline pattern:

God deserves more worshippers.

Oh, by the way, I did go to a preaching workshop at the pastor's conference, but I was turned off right away by the presenter who proudly announced that he was planning to spend the next 7 years preaching through the book of Romans! Immediately I thought to myself: Well, at least his congregation will be able to relate with the Israelites who wandered around in the desert for forty years!

Who plans seven years out? I have a hard time planning seven days out! And from the looks on the faces of those who were present, I can honestly say to you, he misjudged his target audience.

Seriously though, I think I have an initial plan for increasing worship attendance here at FCC. And this brings me to the 5 of the 1 – 5 – 3 patterned outline. Let me summarize it this way:

Over the next 153 days which begins today, May 10 and goes through Saturday, October 10th – 5 months - I propose that our church hosts / sponsors at least 5 outreach events geared toward and focused on engaging the Almont community. These events would be considered “fishing events”.

We, as the church will be casting our broad net to see what we might haul in. (I know this fishing analogy sounds a bit cheesy, but Jesus used it first!)

These events could be a one- day event or a week- long event and the beautiful thing is that some of these events are already on our church calendar. Things like ...

Bicycle “May”tenance

Memorial weekend hotdog luncheon after the ceremony in the park

Vacation Bible School scheduled for July

Worship in the Park

Almont Homecoming coming this August

Almont Heritage Festival

Festival of Trees.

All we need to do is refine these events and add to them in order that they would be more conducive to meeting our overall goal which is to bring in or collect more worshippers of Christ – to increase our Sunday attendance.

Now we're up to the third part of the 1 – 5 -3 pattern outline.

From each of the five events – and like I said before, we can have more than five events over the course of five months, but from these five events, we want to identify at least 3 individuals or family groups that seem like people whom God is calling to be a part of our church and worshipping family.

It will be our job to identify them by getting ...

their contact information

following up with them

inviting them to future church events, especially Sunday worship and just generally get to learn their story.

In this way we will be intentionally and transparently drawing them into the FCC family so that they can do what God wants them to do:

bring honor and glory to his name – and we, in no way should apologize for our efforts because this is what God wants us to do.

I'll get into more details later about how we can do this, but suffice it to say, that we cast the broad net initially in order to make contact with those who might be interested in what our church has to offer – the most important things being ...

salvation in Christ

a sense of community and ...

specific opportunities to grow in faith.

Now it's this last part that I want to highlight briefly:

The opportunities to grow in faith. When I was at the Pastor's conference a couple of weeks ago I was struggling with how we help the new people we "catch" grow and then it dawned on me that the pastor's conference had the answer I was looking for.

Sure, we can invite these folks to Sunday school and church and fellowship hour which all very important, but at the conference the programmers from RHMA which means Rural Home Missionary Association introduced something that is going to start this Fall. It's called TACLE which stands for Town and Country Leadership Events which we can join through video conferencing. They are essentially short 10 minute video sessions followed by a half-hour discussion times. I think these sessions could be instrumental to our church as we seek to help reintroduce God's people to his church, establish

them by finding ways to worship God, grow up in Him and serve His kingdom. This is God's plan for all of us.

In John 21 we learn that Peter hauled 153 fish to the shore in his net and the net, though strained, never broke. In the next 153 days we're going to do our own "fishing" expeditions, casting our broad net at least five times and in so doing, we will identify those who want to join and partner with us in the high and holy calling of garnering praise for God's glory.

I call this whole adventure or season Psalm 153:

Purposely Serving the Almighty in Almont.

I hope God will move in your heart to join me – for the sake of God's glory. Amen.