

Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

21 December 2014

Topics

A.M. Bible Class:

Singing as worship (Hebrews 2:11-13)

A.M. Lesson:

Celebrating our Lord (1 Corinthians 11:23-34)

P.M. Lesson:

God promised eternal life (John 3:16-17)

Wednesday:

Did Adam make me a sinner (Romans 5)?

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-3494

Elders

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" Psalm 122:2

Why personal devotions are not enough

Wesley Hill, Christianity Today, December 2014

Each day began the same way: I would get out of bed, take a shower, and sit down at my desk. I'd place my New American Standard Bible in front of me and open it to where the bright green M'Cheyne's Bible reading calendar kept my place. I would close my eyes and ask God to illumine the texts I was about to ponder. And then I would begin to read—usually two chapters from the Old Testament and two chapters from the new.

At the time, I would have told you that Sunday mornings were extensions of my daily meditations on Scripture. My personal Bible reading was the center of my spiritual life.

Today I think about the relationship between those two readings—private, devotional reading and Sunday morning sermon-listening—in reverse. It's not that I've given up private Bible reading. But now I think of *that* daily ritual as an extension of what I do on Sunday mornings, when I'm gathered with fellow believers to listen to Scripture expounded. First comes hearing, and *then*, by implication, comes personal meditation.

Why did my perspective change? Mainly because of what I came to understand Scripture to be. Contrary to what you might think if you only engage

Scripture in bite-sized "thought for the day" morsels, the Bible isn't a random collection of profound nuggets of truth designed for silent meditation. Rather, what we know today as "the Bible" is actually a collection of books approved to be read publicly in the Christian assembly. The "canon" of Scripture is, literally, the *rule* of which books are trusted to deliver the words of the prophets and apostles to the people of God.

Likewise, the New Testament is called that because it's titled after the Christ-centered "testament" or "covenant" that God made with his people after Jesus' resurrection and pouring out of the Holy Spirit, as promised through the Prophets (Jer 31:31). It's a covenant I renew each week when I gather in God's presence with fellow believers to eat bread and drink wine and proclaim our faith in his risen Son.

In short, I now think of the Bible primarily as the book of the gathered people of God—the church. Notice the order of John's words in the Book of Revelation: "Blessed is the one who *reads aloud* the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who *hear it and take to heart* what is written in it" (1:3, emphasis added). God's Word is proclaimed and corporately heard, and we commit ourselves to pondering it and storing it up in our memory. As early church father Theodore of Mopsuestia put it, "All of us, having come to faith in Christ the Lord

from the nations, received the Scriptures... and now enjoy them, reading them aloud in the churches and keeping them at home." We read privately in order to remember and rehearse what we've listened to publicly.

Bible reading is still essential to my life of faith. But the reason I consider it essential has changed. It's vital to me now because I am mulling the words I've heard with fellow believers, proclaimed to me in the living voice of readers and preachers. Scripture is the Word of God for the body of Christ, and I want to keep meditating on that Word until I hear it afresh next Sunday.

Money and Righteousness

M. W. bassford, <http://hisexcellentword.blogspot.com>

And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her.

--Genesis 29:22-23

Jacob is not the Bible character whom any of us would hold up as an example of sterling honesty. However, the Scripture makes clear that he wasn't the only man of his era who regarded integrity as optional. One of the worst offenders in this was Jacob's uncle, Laban, and one of the sneakiest things that Laban did was swap brides on Jacob. Laban had two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Jacob loved Rachel and indentured himself to Laban for seven years to win her. When the seven years were completed, Laban held a wedding feast for Jacob, but inside the bridal tent, he substituted Leah for Rachel. Thus, when Jacob woke up the next morning, he found himself married to the wrong sister. He ended up working for another seven years to claim Rachel for his second wife.

Laban's motives in this aren't hard to see. We learn a little later on that before Jacob showed up, Laban was far from prosperous. However, when Jacob appeared, because God was with Jacob, Laban's fortunes turned too, and he became far wealthier than he had ever been before. Laban feared that once Jacob had worked his seven years and won Rachel, that he'd move on to someplace else, and Laban's newfound riches would go with him. Laban was perfectly willing to deceive his nephew for seven more years of gain.

Laban's dishonest attitude is all too common today.

There are plenty of people in the world around us who worship Mammon rather than God, and they are devoted to their religion. Covetous men from Wall Street executives to beggars on the street gladly do things that are unethical and even illegal just to get hold of another dollar. Sadly, this mindset appears even among Christians. We've all known brethren who were more concerned about the bottom line in their bank accounts than the finish line on the road to heaven. Although this is a more subtle sin than many, the love of money may end up claiming more souls on the day of judgment than just about anything else.

If we wish to protect ourselves from this disaster, we must arrange our priorities accordingly. God is more important than money. Other people are more important than money. Our word of honor is more important than money. Agreeing to those things is easy, but living up to them is hard. When we get a raise, do we regard that as an opportunity to give more to the Lord, or as an opportunity to raise our standard of living? Would we rather help a brother in need or keep the money for ourselves? If we get underwater on our mortgage, do we fulfill our obligations or look for ways to escape without paying? Money-worshippers will give one set of answers to those questions. Disciples of Jesus must give the other.

News

Potluck today.

Tatyana Knowlton has family in the troubled areas of Ukraine. Please pray for their safety and family cohesion.

Ken Cocke is suffering from a great deal of back pain.

Tatyana Knowlton is in treatment for Macular Degeneration.

Joy Gibson is being treated for cancer.

Bryan Miller, a very close friend of Mark Cavasos, has a painful condition called neurofibromatosis. His treatment requires frequent surgeries.

Prayer List:

*Joy Gibson, Tatyana Knowlton,
Ken Cocke, Janet Radar, H.L.
Boling, Mike and Sandy Cavasos,
Nic and Ani Self.*

