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THOUGHTS FROM JEREMY

A CHANGING WORLD, AN UNCHANGING GOD

Every year, around the end of December, we talk a lot about how things will change. A new year brings new challenges and new blessings. We always put an emphasis on the unknown and how to maintain proper focus throughout the year. I introduce you to the year 2020! Who could have ever predicted the events we have seen this year at only four months in? On top of all the chaos in the world, we all have probably experienced personal unexpected circumstances. I know I have. By the end of February, I had already experienced two bouts of influenza and an unexpected hospital stay due to a bacterial infection.

As I reflect on the last four months, it has done nothing more than reiterate a truth that Jesus revealed 2000 years ago. You cannot put your trust in the things of the world! In Matthew 6:19-20, he warns us saying, *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.”*

As we are bombarded with the reality of an ever-changing world, let us hold on to the greatest truth. God does not change! We are reminded of this fact in Hebrews 6:17-20, *“In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. ¹⁹ This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, ²⁰ where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”*

While navigating the chaos of the world, let us never forget that changes in our health, our finances, our political leaders, our sense of security, or anything else will never change who God is. He is faithful in His promises and sincere in His love for us! I challenge us all to hold on to the hope we have in the unchangeable God. May this hope be an anchor for our soul!

Blessings,
Jeremy

Elder's Corner

SAME AS IT EVER WAS

The phrase, "same as it ever was" refers to the sense that something never changes. Not a fan of change? Then the world we live in today is probably an uncomfortable place for you. With the introduction of the Coronavirus into our world, things around us are literally changing every day as we are constantly bombarded with global statistics and figures presented to us on brightly colored graphs and charts.

We know that changes in our lives can be a good thing. We enjoy the change in seasons. We enjoy seeing our children change as they mature and grow into adults. We pray that the health of our friends and loved ones who are sick will change and they will once again be well.

On the other hand, changes we experience in our lives that are negative can upset us and make us anxious. Loss of love, job loss, the death of someone close to us, serious illness, and natural disasters are just a few of the negative changes most of us will face at some point in our lives.

The Bible tells us that, though many things in our lives change. God's nature and expectations for His children do not. Psalms 102:25-27 tells us, ***"²⁵In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. ²⁶They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them, and they will be discarded. ²⁷But you remain the same, and your years will never end."*** In Malachi 3:6, God directly confirms this about Himself when He says of Himself, ***"I the Lord do not change."***

Because God does not change, His expectations of us do not change. And what are God's expectations of us? After much living and searching, King Solomon discovered the answer to this question. His conclusion was, as found in Ecclesiastes 12:13, ***"Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind."*** The Bible further defines how we are to meet God's expectations when it discusses how we are to please God. Romans 8:8 tells us that we cannot please God if we remain in the flesh. We must be in the spirit through baptism and acceptance of Christ as our Lord. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that, ***"without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."*** Jesus adds additional clarity to this discussion in John 14:15 where He says, ***"If you love me, you will obey what I command."***

God's unchanging nature is vital to us because it helps us to solidify our faith in Him. We can trust that He will always deliver on the promises He has made to us and all of mankind, because His nature never changes. The God that delivered on all His promises in the Bible is the same God we serve today.

Even in more normal times, things around us are always changing. I take great comfort in knowing that, today, our God is the same righteous, loving and merciful God that He has always been.

Your Brother in Christ,
Richard Jay

From a Woman's Point of View

TAKE YOUR BURDENS TO THE LORD

It is hard to believe a few weeks ago I was making plans for my second semester as a teacher; and preparing for my daughter's high school graduation festivities. In addition, I was and still am attempting to be a good wife, mother, and Christian. What a difference a few weeks make. Now the world is drastically different due to the coronavirus pandemic. Many of us find ourselves unusually stressed, anxious or maybe even depressed.

As Christians, we should allow our faith to keep us level during these times of uncertainty. Now is the time to focus our thoughts on Christ and his promises. **Philippians 4:6-7**, ***“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”*** According to **Deuteronomy 31:8**, ***“He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be discouraged.”***

Take care of your body and spirit by being kind to yourself, maintaining a routine, taking time out for activities you enjoy, finding ways to exercise, and helping others. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**, ***“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.”***

Please stay safe. I miss you all.

Your sister in Christ,
Fannie Brown

TEEN NEWS

Hello Family! And welcome to a version of youth ministry that none of us learned about in school! It is weird. It is different. It is challenging. But there is still joy, so much joy, in it. One thing I have observed during all of this, is, that God is not observing the quarantine. He is still very much alive, very much working, and still doing what He always does, no matter our circumstances.

So, what about our Senior Class?

Our plan is to give this senior class the recognition that they deserve, and to give them those special moments in the youth group that they have looked forward to for many years now. When and how is that going to happen? We do not know all of that just yet. But don't you worry: I am working hard on ways to celebrate the class of 2020 with things like Senior Spotlight (on our social media) and Senior Sunday (the night where we honor all of our high school graduates and their families). So stay tuned, hang with me, and pray for me as we continue to figure things out.

*****Senior Parents, please go ahead and pick out 10 pictures of your graduate for the senior video (a variety from infancy to senior year works best!) and turn these into me by May 10!*****

We know that things are weird and crazy. Many of our students are struggling with everything that is going on right now. That being said: I am reminded of the words of Solomon the wise, "***There's nothing new under the sun.***" We are no strangers to weirdness, craziness and struggles. This is just a form of weird, crazy and struggles that we are not used to seeing. If you, your family, or your students are struggling, know that you are not alone. We are here, as always, to serve you in the best way we know how. And it is a blessing to do so.

Your Partner in Ministry,
Paul Wisdom

