

Crossroads Community Church

Sunday July 6th, 2014

What a week filled with ups and downs, we thank the Good Lord for helping us through it. It is reassuring to know that God is always with us and He always sends the right people along the way to encourage us.

Pastor Don shared announcements and offered the service in prayer, "Dear God, we praise you for our changed lives, you help and guide us as we serve others in your name, and during changing times we thank you for the peace that surpasses all understanding, Amen." Pastor Don began with a question, "How many of you have had a squealing sibling, one that always ran to your parents when you did something wrong?" How many of us have been scolded and been asked to say sorry, only to be told, "Say it like you mean it?" What did our parents mean? Do you think they meant to repent, to change our way of thinking and behaving in general and probably mostly our ways of treating our squealing sibling? I believe so, the way we treat others is important but if we've grown up going to church, hearing the word repent may cause some negative thoughts to sprout. We may think of the hairy fellow in the desert saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near," Matthew 3:1-2. Some of us may have heard it from a Tele-Evangelist or a crazy man on a street corner saying repent or the wrath of God will come upon you; scaring people into knowing God is not appealing to say the least.

"What does God feel about repentance and what does it mean to our lives? It means admitting to God that we have sinned asking Him for forgiveness and asking for His help to change our ways. God's desire is to change us, a mind and heart transformation, (Romans 12:2). God wants the best for His children, He wants us to live in a way that Honors Him and that change needs to be done in the mind which transfers into our actions being different, which transforms our hearts and lives. We will become better loving and caring people able to point others to Jesus because our actions will support our words.

John wasn't popular with the self-righteous people of his day, He preached God's truth but he also lived by what He was saying, (Matthew 3:3-7). People came to hear him and their hearts were touched by God to repent and change their lives, they were baptized in water to represent the change in their lives so that others could witness it, it made the change visible.

This change begins at repentance, followed by baptism and it must translate in the way we live, it should produce good fruit; our actions need to match our words, (Matthew 3:8-9). When we repent before God our attitude changes, we trust Him to be in control of circumstances despite persecution, it will affect all our relationships by producing good fruit, good virtues such as patience, tolerance, and forgiveness. Our ethics of moral conduct will be altered, we will refuse to take advantage of our fellow man whether rich or poor, in authority or not and whether we agree with them or not, we will be kinder and more loving. Sometimes that may offend people and we won't fit in with the crowd but better offend in doing what is good than doing evil, (John 15:19). When we let Jesus transform us even our speech is altered, we don't take part of foul language, gossip, critical words or slander, instead we will want to honor them with kind encouraging words, (1 Peter 2:1, Proverbs 10:32). It is true John's message is not easy to hear, unless we repent and change our ways we will face the repercussions and the eventual punishment for our actions. God will sift out the repentant hearts from the stubborn hearts, He will not contend with fruitless people forever, (Matthew 3:10).

Beloved Jesus calls us to confess, repent, get baptised and to follow Him taking up our cross daily, (1 John 1:9, Luke 9:23). In everything that we suffer because our world is imperfect, He wants us to carry on with Him because we will be better able to resist following the world's ways and give in to our selfish ways. Our transformation may begin with repentance and baptism but it doesn't end there, He will guide us and change our ways of thinking and behaving towards Him and each other when we ask Him to reveal any sin still present in our lives. We often cannot see all our sinful ways and we can't turn away from them on our own we need Jesus. Just like pure water to drink must be filtered daily, our hearts and minds need to be filtered, we ought to daily re-examine our lives and ask God to purify us through Jesus, for that reason He baptizes with fire, He has given us his Holy Spirit to daily walk with Him. This week let us draw strength from His Spirit to point others to His saving grace, Asherey Shalom!

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