

Matthew 6.16-18 - "A Call to Joy"**Announcements**

Want to keep up on what's going on around here? Drop your info card in the offering plate and we'll add you to the email newsletter list.

Communities:

This is where we gather to pray, study and encourage one another as part of the work of the Gospel. We would love to get to know you more, and this is one of the best ways to get planted /attached as a part of Seaside.

Please consider joining a Community to strengthen not only your family, but also the larger community.

Contact eric@seasidechurch.com for info on where groups meet or to lead/host one.

Contact Us:
P.O. Box 5533
Bremerton, WA
98312
360.373.1483
info@seasidechurch.com

Practically, Jesus is concerned here, as He has been throughout the Bible in general and Matthew specifically, not just with the practice in particular, i.e. fasting in public and before men, but with the destruction of what was meant to be an incredibly intimate act. When the act of fasting is used as a means of bringing glory to ourselves, or seeking our own pleasures or blessings (Is. 58 & Zech. 7), we put hope in *our* actions. When it is primarily a means of putting our proverbial "eggs" in His basket (making Him the end of our affections, pleasures, blessings, and honor) we put, by faith, our hope in *His actions, person & promises*.

This is incredibly hard. In order to pursue the death of our own will and embrace who we are *in Christ*, we must completely forget ourselves and be about one thing - Him (Ps 16.1-3). This was the lesson we see Abraham learning in Genesis 22.

Normally we meet God in his good gifts and turn every enjoyment into worship with thanksgiving. But from time to time we need to test ourselves to see if we have begun to love his gifts in place of God - John Piper "A Hunger for God"

To what end? Based on 1 Peter 1.3-9 - the end of joy.

According to Nehemiah 8.9-12, there is strength in the joy of the Lord. We are cultivating our *affection*, a deep love and concern for who He is and what He wants for us, for Him, the result of which is joy - joy in who He is, what He has done, and what He will do on our behalf (2 Cor. 9.8-11). We are promised there is great joy when we put ourselves under His mighty and sovereign hand and seek to have His presence be known in every corner of our lives. (see Ps 5.11, 16.1-11, 21.6, 30.5, 43.4, 63.7, 89.15, 92.4).

This joy buoys us when we have no other hope. This is the elemental purpose of fasting, to put our hope in Him, forsaking what we would consider essential (and yet is temporary) in light of what is truly essential (and, remarkably, eternal). We are called not to *worry* about our circumstances, (and thereby focus on and then become consumed with them) but to focus on Him, the Giver of all good things. If He promises to take care of what we eat, drink and wear (Deut 6; Mt. 6.25; Luke 12.22), will He not take hold of everything else and make it new? Will He not intercede and lead us to reconciliation? Will He not see us, downtrodden under the weight of the world, and give His angels charge concerning us (Ps 91)? Will He not bring our lost husbands, friends, children and neighbors to Himself?

So what if we find there is little joy in our lives? What if we find the means to even fight for this joy are far off from our hearts? We know that David found solace in Psalm 51 to the loss of his son as a consequence of his sin in 2 Samuel. We see in Psalm 126 a hope for joy at the end of our tears. It is not a question, again as we have seen over and over in Matthew, of doing more. It is a matter of doing *less* on our own, and seeking our place at His feet, acknowledging the amazing work He has done on our behalf through His life, death and resurrection, making us children of the Most High God. It is doing through His strength - which is perfected in these very moments (2 Cor. 12.9) for His purposes (Luke 22.42), knowing that in the end, we are not yet home, and are waiting for Him to make all things new (Is 35; Rev 21.5). This is why we fast.