

The Weekly Word

July 29 – August 4, 2013

Praying that you have had a blessed week and that you have seen the Lord at work. May this week's reading speaks to your heart.

Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, July 29: Numbers 1– God knows us...

Throughout this chapter I kept thinking, "God knows us. God knows us!"

First He spoke to Moses ... God spoke to him. Then God gave Moses and his brother Aaron, a job to number the able bodied Israelite males 20 and older... but much more specifically, God named the 12 tribal leaders who would assist them in this great undertaking. I was captured by the fact that God named the 12 leaders... *These are the names of the men who are to assist you: from Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur; from Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai; from Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab; I won't go on and list the others with the unfamiliar names we cannot pronounce (see verses 5-15).*

My observation is how well God knew Israel. When the counting was done the men 20 and older numbers 603,550. God knew His people and now Moses and Aaron know God's people.

I kept going back to verses 5-15, God knows us. God knows us by name!

Wow, we serve a God who knows us by name! I immediately thought of Tommy Walkers' song, He knows your name. Check it out on Youtube and let this truth song wash over you:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXrAqE_tSmo

Oh God, thank You for knowing me. In a world where I am a number to most, social security number, credit card number, student id, drivers license number and so on... by You I am known by name.

You know me, really know me.

You know my ancestors and my descendants... and You know me.

I am carried by this fact to Your throne to bless You and to cry, 'Lord, help me to let others know that they too are known and loved by You, the one eternal God.

Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, July 30: Numbers 2– God at the center...

If we took a helicopter ride over the Israelite encampment, we would find the people of Israel forming a huge circle of humanity. Each tribe had its location organized around the compass. The middle of the camp was a large open space, and in the middle of the open space would be the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was the seat of God among the people of Israel.

Viewed from above the Tabernacle was the hub of the people of Israel!

I pondered that imagery...

- God being the center of Israel's life.
- The worship of God central to the people of God.
- Every tribe had that same access to God and His presence.
- No tribe commanded a more important position

And so my ponderings went. But mostly I meditated on God being at the center of the community's and the tribe's and the individual's life.

How do I keep the Lord at the center of my life and my families' life? Daily set-aside time with the Lord is one highly important key to keeping God central in my personal life. Weekly worship as a family and a community of faith is key for me as a member of a faith community to keep God central to my life and work.

These observations are not new, but today's time with the Lord reminds me why they are so important...

In worship I sing Jesus be the center, be the source of my life. More than singing, Lord, I have to practice keeping You at the center of my life. Keep me diligent in my daily times with You and my weekly times of worship.

And, Lord, may these only represent a life that seeks to keep you at the center 24/7/365/

Through You, Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, July 31: Numbers 3– Obedience required...

I was struck by God's direct punishment of Aaron's son who made an unauthorized offering. *Nadab and Abihu, however, fell dead before the LORD when they made an offering with unauthorized fire before him in the Desert of Sinai... (4).*

Nadab and Abihu's sinful action was not some minor infraction. Offerings at the tabernacle were the direct connection to the Lord and therefore were at the heart of the faith, so they were highly significant and visible.

God dealt with this sin swiftly and visibly. Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord.

I have been the recipient of God's grace, mercy and forgiveness countless times, yet verses like this in the Bible remind me that sin will reap its punishment. I MUST NEVER take sin lightly. Never, ever, never!

Forgiveness, my forgiveness, cost Jesus His life. He died on the cross to secure my forgiveness and reconciliation with God. This alone should keep me mindful of sin's cost. But it doesn't. I sometimes take forgiveness for granted. Verses like the one this morning become another reminder that SIN earns God's wrath.

It seems wise to me this morning to spend some time in self reflection, examining my life and making my confession to God, thanking Him for His grace, mercy and forgiveness in Jesus, which I must not presume upon...

Lord God...

Thursday, August 1: Numbers 4–...

The Lord certainly has everything organized! How to care for the Tabernacle is clearly spelled out.

I found myself thinking about the Kohathites, the Levite clan who was in charge of carrying the most holy things of the Tabernacle. Because of the holiness of these items, the priests had responsibility for packing and covering the holy items. Only after the most holy items were packed and covered could the Kohathites carry them. *After Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy furnishings and all the holy articles, and when the camp is ready to move, the Kohathites are to come to do the carrying. But they must not touch the holy things or they will die... (15).*

The severity of that last sentence hit me. God made the boundaries perfectly clear, only priests were allowed to touch the holy things.

As I pondered this I was launched into thoughts about honor, dignity and reverence for God. We don't speak about these attributes very often when we speak about how people are to treat God. Connection with God has grown much more casual, except in some of the more liturgical expressions of the Christian church. Yet ever their casualness with the things of God is growing.

Some of our casualness with God is healthy, allowing for a deeper more intimate relationship with the Lord is possible. ON the flip side we have lost some (much) reverence and awe of God, even a healthy fear of God.

Today's reading has me reflecting on this latter aspect and places and ways I can raise reverence, awe and healthy fear up a few notches in my life and relationship with the Lord.

Blessed be the name of the Lord... his name is higher than any other...

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty...

Praise to the Lord the almighty the king of creation...

Lord God almighty I bow before You. You alone are to worshipped and glorified. You alone are worthy of praise and honor... for You alone are God and I bow and submit to You. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Friday, August 2: Numbers 5--...

Verse 3 stunned me. I knew people with infectious skin diseases (what we might call lepers) were forced to live outside the community. Because of their disease they were labeled unclean. In Jesus' day, when lepers traveled, they were required to cry "unclean, unclean" if in their journey they came across other people. How humiliating that must have been.

I also can understand hygienic reasons for the above. Leprosy is an easily transmitted disease, so community safety was at stake. But I also understand the cruel nature of humanity and how we can take a hygienic reason and attach 'unclean' human emotional significance to it as we exclude others.

In Israel the community exclusion also meant that access to the tabernacle and temple was denied. In a faith where sacrifices and pilgrim gathering-feasts were required, lepers were excluded from God as well. They were outcasts!

It is precisely here were I was stunned! Look back at verse three. If you are like me, you missed something significant. I have read this verse at least yearly since 1975 and I don't recall ever seeing the last 5 words of the verse. *Send away male and female alike; send them outside the camp so they will not defile their camp, where I dwell among them.*

God was protecting the healthy when He sent them away from the camp. God had not abandoned them. God himself would go to them and live with them! What an incredible picture of love... love for the diseased and love for the healthy. Sadly the healthy attached a God-hating stigma to those with skin diseases, something that must have broken the heart of the Lord!

As I thought about this gift of God, I thought about medical and loving missionaries who put themselves at risk serving people with certain diseases... AIDS and leprosy come to mind. I think of Mother Teresa walking the street of Calcutta creating the order of the Sisters of Charity.

Then I thought about Jesus. In His incarnation Jesus came to dwell among the spiritually unclean, showing us the way back to the Father through faith in Jesus. And while Jesus walked this earth, He personally crossed barriers of uncleanness in order to touch, heal and reach out to physically unclean, modeling the heart God has for people with these conditions. Jesus put into human form what God spoke in Numbers 5:3.

Wow, think about this...

Oh, Jesus, Father, Spirit where would you have me go? Whom would you have me touch for the sake of the Gospel, for the sake of love...??? Amen.

Saturday, August 3: Numbers 6– God’s blessing...

Aaron and his sons are to speak this blessing over God’s people. *”The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace”* (24-26).

Bless and keep... shine upon and be gracious... look at you and give peace. Such is the blessing of God.

I took a mental journey through these doublets.

Bless and keep... As if the blessing of God wasn’t enough, God will keep us. Keep, watch over, protect, guard, own, care for... all these synonyms came to mind. Oh, the wonder of God keeping us!

Make His face shine upon and be gracious to... I see a broad smile growing on God’s face as He makes his face shine upon us. Pleased to see us, delighted in us... wow! And add to that God’s grace lavishing us. Amazing!

Turn His face to us and give us peace... I see myself moving through a crowd and God catches my eye as He follows me and smiles. A wink, a nod, I am watching over you. I am caring for you. And then on top of all this, God grants peace. Peace within the human soul, and peace without with others.

This is a blessing of extraordinary value. This is God’s gift. This is the blessing the priests of God were directed to speak over the people of God.

Thank you, Lord. Now may I translate your blessing into a blessing to others in Your name? Thanks be to God! May your kingdom advance... Amen.

Sunday, August 4, 2013, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.