

October 13, 2019

Finding Trouble: Praying Dangerously Part 2

Psalm 139:17-24; Psalm 51:1-17

“Here comes trouble.” You know this phrase. It is usually said in a joking way in reference to someone that well, trouble seems to follow close behind them.

When I was just getting into trail running and discovering the world of ultra-marathons. I was hooked. I loved it and wanted to share the experience with others. Who would be crazy enough to want to go run 10, 20, 30 plus miles? Two of my best friends said yes to my invitation and took the bait and promise of adventure and ran with it. Literally. And we became a running trio.

The thing about us was we never took ourselves too seriously and we ran and trained in very unorthodox way. For whatever reason the combination of us three was a perfect storm where trouble somehow always seemed to find us. We embraced it and called our trio the knuckleheads, because we consistently found ourselves in knucklehead situations. Of course, it had nothing to do with bad choices or poor planning.

From starting runs at midnight, to getting lost, running out of water, seeing lions, snakes, and bears... O my. Getting stuck in snowstorms, hailstorms and downpours. When the knuckleheads were together you could say with confidence. Here comes trouble.

Most people will do just about everything to avoid trouble and stay far away from trouble. Many are just content to stay in their comfort zones and don't want to ruffle too many feathers. So it probably feels a bit uncomfortable that here at FPC we are talking about finding trouble.

But the trouble we are looking for is the best kind. It is the kind of trouble that comes from stepping out of our comfort zones in following Jesus. Seeking His ways and His kingdom. To go where He wants us to go and do what He wants us too.

We know growth and spiritual growth happens not by being comfortable or complacent but when we are stretched and when we feel a bit in over our heads. When we are in place where we have to trust and rely on God and realize our need for Him. His strength, power and presence.

Speaking of finding trouble... we currently have a team of people who are in Uganda right now serving with one of our global ministry partnerships, Amani baby cottage. I imagine there will be moments where they find themselves outside of their comfort zones and feel in over their heads as they serve and love others.

We have a group right now meeting every Thursday that is finding trouble as they are learning more about themselves and God in pursuit of emotionally healthy spirituality.

Last week Tom talked about how we can find trouble by stepping out to BLESS and share the good news about Jesus with others.

As we are discovering, there are many opportunities and ways we can find trouble. We just need to be willing to step out, be led by God and trust He is with us and growing us.

A couple weeks ago I talked about praying dangerously. If you missed it, praying dangerously is about coming before God in a posture of availability and surrender. It is praying prayers that pull us from our comfort and spiritual safety zones to step out and find trouble, in the best way possible.

We looked at two ways to pray dangerously. “God Your kingdom come, Your will be done”; And “Here I am, send me.” This morning I want to look at two more ways to pray dangerously.

Before we get into that let’s invite God to open our hearts. Let’s pray a dangerous prayer we have prayed past two weeks. It’s on the back of your bulletin and on the screen.

Disturb us, Lord, when
We are too pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
With the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity

And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.
Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wilder seas
Where storms will show Your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.
We ask you to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push back the future
In strength, courage, hope, and love.
This we ask in the name of our Captain,
Who is Jesus Christ. Amen

Are we disturbed yet?

Throughout the Psalms, David prayed a lot of dangerous prayer. I want to take a look at one of those prayers found in Psalm 139. This is a familiar Psalm full of hope and comfort as David praises God and His wonderful works. He praises God who knows us fully and is always with us.

But then in verse 19 we see a shift. David turns his attention to the reality of the wickedness in the world and of others. He shares honestly his feelings about his enemies and the enemies of God.

But he doesn't stop there. He doesn't end by making excuses or blaming others or sitting in a pity party. He responds with a dangerous prayer.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting*

Search me?

Maybe you are wondering, "How is this a dangerous prayer?" All of Psalm 139 reminds us, God knows everything and knows us from the inside and out. It's not like we can hide something from Him or that God will discover something He doesn't already know.

Of course, I have my shortcomings and faults but really, my heart is good. It's in the right place. Most of you, your heart is good. Right?

Unfortunately, no. As they say In the south, "Bless your heart." But the reality is our hearts are not good.

Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us, "The heart is deceitful above all things". It's only by God's grace, through Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit who can create a new and clean heart that David prays for in Psalm 51.

What makes this prayer dangerous is it invites God to draw near, and to search and reveal. The God who draws near to us is the God who knows us—who knows even those parts of our lives we would prefer to remain hidden.

We love the idea and comfort of God being close... we just prefer not to close.

Asking God to search me exposes and brings to surface the reality of my deceitful heart. It reveals my sin that can be so blinding to us.

Sin we push down, keep hidden, ignore, rationalize and minimize.

But when we ask God to search us, He will, and He will expose and reveal things in our life that are not pure or holy or just. He will bring to the surface those things that we need to confront, confess and let die with our old self.

David not only asks God to search Him but also to test and know His thoughts. Part of praying “search me” is also asking God to test and reveal our thoughts.

Another way of saying that is, “know my cares” or “know my anxious thoughts.” “Reveal my fears.”

What is it that makes you anxious? What is it that you fear? What are you afraid of? I am not talking about things like heights, or snakes, or driving through traffic circles, or clowns.

But I am talking about deep down at the core what are our anxieties and fears? What keeps you up at night? What hijacks most of your mental energy? What keeps you from stepping out of your comfort zone and finding trouble? What affects your decisions and relationships with others?

Is it fear of losing your job? Not being able to provide. Are you afraid of being lonely? Letting someone down? Do you fear of the future or unknown, the “what if”? Are you afraid to fail? What if I fail at this? Loss? What if I lose someone I care about?

Why is this so important for us to pray this dangerous prayer? “God search me and reveal my anxious thoughts.” It is so important because what we worry about, what makes us anxious what we fear the most reveals the areas of our life where we trust God the least.

Fear keeps us from obeying God. Fear keeps us slaves to the old self. It keeps us from stepping into the abundant life and freedom God has for us. Fear weakens, disables, and even paralyzes our life and witness and stunts our spiritual growth.

Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 1:7- “God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind.” Not only that but God has given us His spirit to live within us who helps us, and guides us and fills us with power and love and sound mind.

Ask God to know and reveal your thoughts and fears so that we can give them to Him and let Him in and trust Him more.

Search me, know my heart. Know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me. Reveal.

It takes courage and boldness to pray this. “God show me if there is anything inconsistent with your Word and with your truth. Anything that is displeasing to you.”

I mean, isn't it so much easier to point out the sins of others. So much easier to focus on and accuse others and their shortcomings all while making excuses for ourselves. “Well at least I'm not like that person” or “At least I'm not that bad.”

When we pray this dangerous pray, God will reveal things about ourselves that we may not want to acknowledge or deal with for a long time because we don't like it, or we don't want others to know or find out or it's easier to convince ourselves, "I've got this, Im fine!"

But really, we aren't fine. That is why this is an important prayer. It reveals how not find we are and whatever God reveals will always point directly to our need for Christ. We can't do it on our own. What God reveals will point to that need.

My need for His grace. My need for His salvation. My need for His strength. My need to have my value, purpose, and identity rooted in Him and not what I do or what people may think about me.

Then out of our need for Jesus we pray "Lead me. Lead me in the way everlasting." David prayed this.

When you pray this prayer, God will reveal our need. Then we must allow Jesus to meet that need and conform us to his image. It's a dangerous prayer, but it's a pray that can and will transform our life.

Which brings us to another dangerous prayer. To be honest, this is the one I struggle with the most. Maybe that's why I put it off until the very end. Some of you will not like this prayer. Some will hesitate to pray it. It's a difficult prayer and a dangerous prayer because it involves full surrender of self. But I promise it is a good prayer, and life-transforming prayer.

This dangerous prayer is "God, break me." It's even difficult to say now. We don't really like the idea of being broken.

And the thing is break or broken can mean a lot of different things. It can be negative- This test is going to break me. She broke my toy. My house was broken into. Or positive- You deserve a break. He broke the marathon record. Or we have a breakthrough.

But what does it mean to be broken before the Lord? Spiritual brokenness.

I believe Psalm 51 provides us some insight on what this means. This Psalm is David's response after being confronted by Nathan, exposing David's hidden sin of adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. We see David, the man after God's own heart, the great king of Israel, the mighty warrior now as a broken man. A man truly broken by his sin.

He cries out to God, knowing he has no hope outside of who God is.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. (Psalm 51:1-2)

He knows he needs God and his only desire in this moment is to be clean again. "Create in me a clean heart"

To be forgiven. To have his relationship with God restored. David knows he is asking the only One who can do this.

He prays in verse 17:

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

We discover that David knew something so valuable about brokenness. God does not want us to just try harder. Or to do better. He does not want us to just ignore our sin, convincing ourselves, “I’m Fine.”

God does not want us to feed our pride by taking it upon ourselves to “make things right” or do it my way. Nor does He simply want us to sit and dwell in sadness and shame and self-deprecation over the consequences and pain our sin brings to us.

What God desires and what He wants is humility. He wants surrender. He desires spiritual brokenness.

Praying for God to break me is asking God to break away anything that is not of Him. Break away our pride, our selfishness. Break away the sin that easily entangles and trips us up. Break us from the chains of self and sin that keep us from the abundant life Jesus invites us into— that Jesus died and rose again for us to have.

This is a dangerous prayer because brokenness is not easy. It can be painful, and a long process. It is daily dying to the old self.

What is it in our lives that God needs to break us from? Are there things that God wants to remove? Are there things that God wants to add to your life? What are we holding on to struggling to let God break us from?

After praying “*Search me O God*”, a lot of sin, fear, and pride will be exposed and those are things that must be broken down. That God must break away from us.

In order to become more like Christ God must break everything in us which is not Jesus. Our pride, our arrogance, our sin.

As Paul says in Gal 2:20- *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

This dangerous prayer isn’t the work of a tyrant and abusive God who will break us down, leaving us crushed and destroyed, abandoned in a pit somewhere. No, it’s quite the opposite. It’s the work of a God who loves us unconditionally, who will never leave us nor forsake us, who gave everything to be in relationship with us, to restore and redeem us.

Throughout scripture God at times is pictured as the potter and we are the clay. I love the picture of the potter we see in Jeremiah 18.

The Potter takes the clay and molds it. Shapes and forms it. Yet, if the clay is marred, or not as he wants it to be, he breaks it down and begins work again. Kneading it and pressing, pushing and pulling.

And what we see and experience is God doesn’t give up. His love never fails. God doesn’t throw away what is broken. Rather, He works with it. Shaping and molding it He makes it something new and beautiful.

To pray, “God break me” is really praying “God make me” Psalm 46 reminds us God is close to the broken hearted and humble and contrite. He takes our brokenness and our surrender and makes something new and beautiful and unique.

One of the beautiful things about spiritual brokenness is how God uses it. Accepts our spiritual brokenness and humble and contrite hearts and places His personal touch on it.

As followers of Jesus not only must we become like Christ, but we must also authentically become our true selves as God created us to be. Each of us is called to reflect Christ, but He has made us, as unique individuals, fearfully and wonderfully made to reflect something particular about Him in a unique way. God takes our brokenness and it at work helping us become the man or the woman that God made us to be. Our true self.

The upside-down nature of God’s kingdom at times baffles me. It is so contrary to our thinking and understanding. The last will be first and the first will be last. The least will be the greatest and so on. It’s the same with brokenness. For us, if something is broken it has less value but in God’s kingdom brokenness is valued.

God accepts and values and redeems our brokenness into something new and beautiful.

Will we allow him to break us and make us so he can form us for his amazing plan and purposes? What is keeping us from this? What is it that God need to break us of today?