



Sermon Notes

Term - Summer

Series - Joseph

Gathering & Date - The 5 on 12th August 2018

Title - Staying close to God

Preacher - Chris Brown

Reading - Genesis 37:12-36

Main message of this talk in one sentence - We thrive when we are close to God, our lives overflow with the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Main points - Joseph's brothers' jealousy and hatred toward him has grown to the point where they intend to kill him. They appear to have no sense that this would be wrong, they are justifying their actions on the basis of their hatred. Reuben and Judah make half hearted attempts to save Joseph, they or any of the brothers could, at any point, have said "enough of this, Joseph is our brother, let's be reconciled with him."

The underlying problem with the brothers is the distance between them and God. If they were close to God then they would be talking to God about the jealousy they feel towards Joseph and addressing that before it grew to the point where they desire to murder their brother.

The good news for us is that God doesn't give up on any of Jacob's sons. By the end of the account of Joseph's life the brothers are reconciled with each other and with God (Genesis 50:15-21). They refer to themselves as "Servants of the God of Jacob." God inaugurates the twelve tribes of Israel through the brothers and Joseph's sons.

God's desire for each of us is that we thrive, that we live life to the full (John 10:10). The way God has created us to thrive is by being in increasingly close relationship with him. When we are growing closer to God the fruit of our lives will be the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Conversely, when we are becoming increasingly distant from God the fruit of our lives will be increasingly sinful. Therefore our primary focus should be on our relationship with God, on growing closer to God.

If we focus on our sin then we are being like the Pharisees who thought they could achieve God's standard in their own strength. This leads to pride when we feel we've achieved what God requires, or to condemnation when we don't achieve what God requires. We might through our own effort achieve outward behaviour that is in keeping with the fruit of the Spirit, but this is far from living life to the full that Jesus talks about, it is merely managing our behaviour.

God's plan for our lives is far better. Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension mean that we can be reconciled with God by believing in Jesus. When we choose to follow Jesus, God calls us close to him and transforms our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. We don't have to achieve some standard of behaviour before we can be reconciled to God, God accepts us as we are right now because of what Jesus has done for us. This is an ongoing relationship and transformation. We have to be intentional in growing closer to God. We do this by frequently investing time in our relationship with God and by being vulnerable, by being who we really are before God.

For further thought and prayer -

Take time to reflect on your relationship with God. Are you becoming distant from God, or growing closer to God?

What could you do today to be closer to God?

However your relationship with God is, the great news is that you can start growing closer to God right now. Spend time in God's presence, read Psalm 121 or 139 and reflect on God's love for you and his care of you.