

THE PROCLAMATION

PROCLAIMING LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES... ISAIAH 61:1



July 2012
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 CrossWay Fellowship
Church

www.crosswayfellowshipchurch.org



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Hello everyone!

In this month's message you might say we are going treasure hunting. Not for silver and gold but a treasure that is much more valuable. And we will find that treasure in the most unlikely places. We have all seen the pirate cartoons when they find an old rusty chest covered in dirt. Then when they open the chest they find a shiny, valuable treasure inside. I pray that through this message we might all see that despite our human weaknesses and failures, God wants to put His treasure in us.

In Christ's love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Walton".

Pastor Dennis Walton

Come worship with us!

- Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
- Sunday morning worship 10:50 a.m.
(Children's Church provided)
(Nursery provided)
- Sunday evening worship 6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday worship/Bible study 7:00 p.m.
(Youth classes of all ages provided)

“Treasure in Earthen Vessels”

II Corinthians 4:6-7

6. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

What is this “treasure” that Paul is talking about? It is God’s love. To be more specific, it is the understanding and knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ. When we believe and receive Jesus by faith, the Spirit of God comes and dwells within us. The devil is evicted and the Lord moves in. The person we used to be dies and we become a new creature in Christ. Paul said that those who don’t have that knowledge are blind and lost, which we all have been at some time in our life. But God desires to “manifest” His truth to us, which means He takes what we can’t see or understand and opens our eyes to the truth. And once you understand that Jesus died for you and has forgiven all your sins, He becomes the greatest treasure in your life.

As humans we have a tendency to try to stock pile treasure in order to obtain some sort of peace of mind or even social status. But in **Matthew 6:19-21** Jesus taught that we should not strive to store up worldly treasures because moths and rust can destroy them and people can steal them from us. That’s why gold, silver, stocks, bonds, houses, land, vehicles, etc. are not true treasures. Gold and silver can be stolen, stocks and bonds can be ripped off by fraud, houses can burn, land values can decrease, and vehicles can be wrecked. It could all be gone in a second. But if we are storing up Heavenly treasures such as eternal life, God’s blessings, God’s work, etc., by living for Jesus, some day we will receive those treasures and nothing will take them away from us. All the riches in the world can’t compare with the treasure we have in Jesus Christ!

Now that we’ve established what the treasure is, let’s talk about the earthen vessels that God puts His

treasure in. A vessel is a container that you put things of value into. An *earthen* vessel is a container made out of the earth. Let’s use a clay pot for example. You could scoop up a clump of clay out of the ground, put it on a potter’s wheel and mold it into a pot, and then put it in the fire of a kiln to harden, and you would have yourself an earthen vessel. Over time that clay pot can chip, crack, and even break. But you can still store flour, sugar, coins, cookies (*my favorite*) or other things of value inside of it. The pot itself is really not what’s important. It’s the treasure inside the pot that is the most important.

Now then, how’s that apply to us? Our physical bodies are also earthen vessels because we were made from the earth. In the beginning (*and yes I still believe that in the beginning God spoke this earth into existence. No evolution...no gap...just “God said, and there was.”*) God reached down and scooped up a pile of clay and breathed His breathe of life into it and it stood up on its feet and said “howdy!” And we too are subject to cracks, chips, and breaks. Physically we can be broken. That’s why doctors have x-ray machines. But most importantly we can be broken spiritually through our sin. Let’s face it, we humans are messed up. Each one of us has the potential of unspeakable evil and each one of us have failed. We are born flawed because of our sin nature. Yet despite all of our weaknesses and flaws God still chooses to put His treasure of the gospel in us. Then once the Spirit of God comes to dwell within us, He can begin to deal with our cracks and chips. Because again, it’s not the vessel that is important, it is the treasure that matters the most. God does not look for perfect people to put His treasure of love into. First of all, because no perfect person exists. He looks for broken and weak people to give His love to. **Romans 5:8 says, “God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”**

Someone that is not a Christian may be reading this right now and you’ve thought to yourself, and maybe even made the statement,

“those Christians are just hypocrites. They think they are so perfect but I’ve seen them do this. And I’ve heard them say that.” But the idea that Christians are perfect is just not true. And only a true Christian will admit they are not perfect. In fact, let me be so bold as to say that any Christian that claims to be perfect and better than anyone else is a liar according to **I John 1:8**. Look, I know there are hypocrites in the church. Get over it already! But wouldn’t you rather go to church with hypocrites than go to Hell with them? Just think about it. Anyway, I’m not trying to defend the hypocrite that points out everyone else’s sin and doesn’t see their own. But I am defending true Christians that love Jesus with all their heart who are less than perfect. And I am one of them. Believe me, I’m not a preacher because I think I’m perfect. I’m a preacher because God continues to love me and bless me even though I have messed up so many times. Oh how amazing is our God’s grace! Don’t get me wrong, I’m not trying to make excuses for our sins. We should always be striving to live by the Word of God and do what is right. I’m simply pointing out that we are all a work in progress. So if you are someone that seems to get hung up on the fact that Christians mess up too, can I encourage you to focus more on the treasure in them than the cracked vessel?

Another reason why God doesn’t put His treasure of love into perfect people is because when God does great things through flawed people, He gets all the glory. No man can take credit for doing extraordinary things that are beyond his own strength. David couldn’t take credit for defeating Goliath because David was much smaller than Goliath. Moses couldn’t take credit for parting the Red Sea because that is humanly impossible for a man to do. (*Although I know a few people that are windy enough to dry out a large body of water.*) The point is, our weaknesses make God’s power even more amazing.

Here’s an example for all you NASCAR fans. The professional mechanics build a powerful engine

and then put it in an awesome looking car with excellent suspension and top of the line chassis. As we watch the cars roar past the camera we aren't thinking about the engine because we are focused on the car. We ooh and awe over the shiny metal, the wheels, the tires, the stickers, and the driver. I'll prove it. Have you ever seen a poster of a NASCAR car? Of course you have, there are hundreds of them. Have you ever seen a poster of a NASCAR engine? I thought not. Nobody wants to sit and look at a greasy engine. But isn't the engine the most important part? That car couldn't go 0 to 60 in 4.2 centuries without the power of the engine. The engine is the treasure so the engine should get the glory. Now if you take that same engine and put it in a Ford Focus and win the Daytona 500, then the engine is going to get the credit it deserves. Plain car, powerful engine. That's why God chooses normal, weak, and flawed people to do His work on the Earth. His power shines and He gets the glory, not us. Plain person, powerful God!

Now here's an example for you fishermen. My family and I love to go to the State Parks at Montauk and Bennett Springs to catch trout. And usually while we are there we will swing by the hatchery and feed the trout in the tanks. One day I was walking along the edge of the tank and noticed that everywhere I walked the fish followed. When I stepped left, they swarmed left. When I stepped right, they swarmed right. (*At first I thought that maybe I had a Noah-like quality that makes animals naturally come to me. But then I remembered all the whitetails that have run away from me over the years. So that blew that theory*). The fact is, those fish didn't give a rip about me. They couldn't care less what my name is, what my annual income is, what my talents are, what kind of house I live in, or how many times I have failed in my life. The only reason they were following me was because of what I had in my hand...fish food. It wasn't the vessel they were interested in but it was the treasure that I possessed. Think of it like this. When it comes to fishing what is the most important; the pole, or the reel, or the string, or the hook? Nope. The most important thing when it comes to fishing is the

bait. You could go to the sporting goods store and buy the best rod and reel money can buy, along with matching waders. You could even buy the shiniest fiberglass bass boat in the show room, but if you don't have any bait then you just as well swing by Captain D's on the way home because that's the only way you're going to have fish for supper. The fish are not impressed with our gear. They aren't down in the water saying, "wow check out the glitter on that boat! And look at that 300 horse power two stroke Evinrude outboard motor strapped to the back of that bad boy! Come on guys, let's bite these empty hooks so we can take a ride in it!" (*as you can tell, I have an overactive imagination*) The point is that the fish are only interested in the bait. You and I represent the equipment but Jesus represents the bait. The equipment is worthless without the bait. We as God's people must always remember that we have been called to be "fishers of men." Therefore we have to come to grips with the fact that when people need help, it is not our talents and bright ideas that will help them. It is the Jesus in us that people need. They are not impressed with the fact that you have read the Bible through twice, or your education, or even your Christian T shirt. They are drawn to you because of the Spirit of God that is in you. Let's all try to do a better job presenting the bait and not the equipment.

Acts 3 tells a story about a man that had been crippled ever since he was born. Everyday someone would carry him to the gate of the temple so he could beg for money as people went to church. But one day his whole story changed in an instant. As Peter and John were going into the temple the man asked them if they could spare a dollar for a poor ole cripple. Peter's response was interesting. He admitted that he was broke. He didn't pretend to be something he wasn't. He knew that he did not have the financial ability to move this guy from the poor house to the Hilton. Peter knew that the greatest treasure he had was the Spirit of God within him. And he also knew that it was that treasure that could help the cripple man. Peter looked at him and said, "I don't have any silver and gold but what I do have, I will give

you. In the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk." Instantly the cripple man's whole lower body was super charged with the healing power of God. Every bone, every muscle, ligament, and tendon received strength and began to function. The former cripple man was so excited that he stood up on his new feet and decided to take them for a test drive. He ran all over the place jumping up and down like a child that just got the Christmas present he had been wanting. As you can imagine, this caused quite the curiosity of the townspeople. They couldn't deny that something amazing had just happened. With their own eyes they were watching a man, whose legs looked like a pretzel an hour ago, dancing a jig in the middle of the street. But then they made the same mistake that many people still make today. They started patting Peter on the back as though he were a great powerful man or even a god. They were praising the man rather than the God in the man. But Peter quickly set them straight and explained that he did not perform this great miracle but rather it was God who had made the lame man walk. Peter was just the vessel. And a broken one at that. You don't have to read about Peter's life very long to figure out that he had some issues. But despite his issues God filled him with the treasure of the Holy Ghost and used him in a mighty way.

I believe that God can still use His people today to do amazing things. But we must be like Peter and admit that we are broke and then be willing to share what the Lord has given us. We must realize our limitations and then trust the God in us who has no limits.

Okay, let me use one more Bible story to drive this message home. It's found in **II Samuel 6:11-12**. It's a story about a man that many Christians have never heard of. His name was Obededom and his story goes like this: One day King David needed a place to store the ark of the covenant for a while. If you don't know what the ark of the covenant was let me briefly explain. The ark of the covenant was a very sacred golden box that was used to store three very sacred things; the ten commandment stones, Aaron's rod that budded, and a pot of manna. But it was really much

more than just a fancy treasure chest. It represented God's presence among the Hebrew people. They took it to battle with them and God drove away their enemies. It was kept in the center of the Temple, in the center of town, in the center of their lives. It was the room where the ark of the covenant was stored that the priest went into to pray for forgiveness for the people's sins. God's glory, God's presence, and God's blessings followed the ark of the covenant wherever it went. And it blessed whoever it was around. And that's where Obbedom comes in. When King David needed a quick hiding place for the ark he stashed it at Obbedom's house. And the Bible says, **"The Lord blessed the house of Obbedom and all that pertained to him because of the ark of God."** In the three months that the ark was on his property his whole life took a turn for the better.

Would you mind if I use my overactive imagination and venture out into Dennisland for just a moment? I picture it happening something like this. One day Obbedom and his wife are sitting at the kitchen table with their head in their hands. Their whole life is falling apart at the seams. Obbedom's wife has been diagnosed with a terminal illness at the same time that he found out he lost his job due to the bad economy. Their children aren't much help because they got mixed up with the wrong crowd and are now drug addicts and alcoholics. The crops that he grows to help supplement his income have shriveled up and all but died due to the lack of rain. With tears in their eyes and a confused broken heart they are just about to come to the conclusion that there is no hope when they hear a knock on the door.

When Obbedom opens the door his yard is full of royal horses and chariots and King David is standing on his front porch. Not your normal everyday house guest. They sit down on the front porch swing and David begins to explain that he needs a place to store the ark of God for a while and asks if he can keep it on Obbedom's property. He agrees and King David heads for home.

The next morning when Obbedom gets out of bed he notices

that his back didn't hurt like it usually does. In fact, he felt better than he had in years. He also noticed his wife didn't look as puny as she had been since her diagnosis. That afternoon they went to her routine doctor visit and to their surprise the doctor said, "we don't know what's happened but this time when we ran your tests we couldn't find any trace of disease in your body", and sent her home with a clean bill of health. As they are leaving the doctor's office they run into a man that Obbedom hasn't seen in years. Making small talk, the man begins to tell about how his business has grown and that he is looking for a good hardworking, honest man that he can hire to run things. When Obbedom mentions that he had just lost his job, the man hires him on the spot and offers to pay him twice his old salary.

A few days go by and he looks out his window and sees his children coming down the driveway. They explain how they had become so tired of the sinful life they had been living and were ready to get their lives straightened out. With their kids clean and sober the whole family was back together again. Obbedom had been wondering how he was going to take care of the crops since he had been so busy with his new job. Now he had all the help he needed. However, the drought had taken its toll on the crop and he began to fear that it would die. He bends down and picks up a handful of powdery dirt and says, "boy I sure wish it would rain." The second the words come out of his mouth he hears thunder rumble in the distance. Within an hour Obbedom and his family are jumping up and down in puddles, dancing in the rain.

Again, it may not have happened exactly that way but I know that Obbedom had problems because we all do. And I know that having the presence of God in his life made a huge difference. And I'm not saying that if you live for God that all your problems will disappear. But I am saying that if you live for God it will make a tremendous difference in your life.

The last thing you need to realize in this story is that Obbedom was not a Hebrew. He was a Gittite, which means he was an idol worshipper. He was a broken, messed

up vessel, yet God chose to come into his life and bless him abundantly. It was not Obbedom's righteousness that brought the blessings because he, like us, didn't have any righteousness. It was the treasure, the presence of God, that he possessed that blessed him and those around him.

Because of God's grace Obbedom's life was changed forever. I have a feeling he never called out to one of those false idol gods again as long as he lived. He had come in contact with the one true God and He became his life's treasure. In fact, can't you see him hanging on to the back of the chariot as King David is taking the ark back to Jerusalem? He was probably yelling, "please don't take it away, please!!"

Okay, here's the good news for you and me. So we're messed up. We admit it. We have made our mistakes and will make more. But despite that fact, God has showed us mercy and offered to put His Spirit in us and bless us. Just keep in mind, life doesn't last forever. You are only going to be in that earthen vessel for a short time. Call out to God and ask Him to put His treasure in you.

Decision Time

Life is full of decisions. We make them every day. But this decision is the most important one of your life. Whether God accepts you or rejects you will depend on whether you decide to accept or reject Jesus Christ.

You surely can admit that you have sinned in your life. We all have. And nature itself teaches you that there is a price to pay for your sins. If you commit a crime, you will pay the penalty for it with a fine, jail time, or even the death penalty. By disobeying God's law, we have all sentenced ourselves to death. But God loves us so much that He doesn't want us to die in our sins and spend eternity paying the penalty in Hell. Therefore, He sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the price for our sins so that we might be saved.

Imagine it like this. Let's say you commit a crime and are sentenced to die in the electric chair. But just as they are about to throw the switch, someone swings the door open and yells, "stop!" To your amazement, the person standing in the door way says, "let him go and I'll take his place." So the warden unlatches the straps, stands you on your feet, and lets you walk out the door. Then he sits the other person in the chair, straps him down, and throws the switch. That is what Jesus did for you and me when He died on the cross.

So now the question is, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to reject Jesus now and pay the penalty yourself on judgment day, or are you going to accept Jesus now and let his sacrifice on the cross pay your penalty for you?

If you will humble yourself and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, repent of your sins and be baptized, and commit your life to serving Him only, then He will save you from your sins and write your name in Heaven. It will be the best decision of your life!

Folks I'm nothing. I'm just a sinner saved by the grace of God. And my whole purpose in printing The Proclamation is to help you find what I have found...God's love is so sweet!

Outside Youth Drama



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