

MORE AND MORE OF JESUS
Philippians 3:7-11

March 17, 2023

In an effort to nurture and strengthen their relationships with their church customers, our financial institution hired a person to facilitate those relationships. Indeed, through the facilitator we strengthened our relationship with the institution. Additionally, our relationship with the facilitator grew even more than with the institution. Because of the personal time we spent with her to facilitate the relationship, it created a desire for more knowledge of her and more fellowship with her.

As Paul reflected on his relationship with God and how knowing Jesus further nurtured and strengthened the relationship, he acknowledged that having the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus created a desire for more knowledge of Jesus and fellowship with Jesus. Moreover, Paul declared that everything else was garbage when compared to gaining intimacy with Jesus. Therefore, Paul concluded that more than anything else on this earth, he desired more knowledge of Jesus and more fellowship with Jesus.

Praise God for the righteousness of God that we have received through faith in Jesus. Praise God even more for the subsequent relationship we have established with Jesus. May we, like Paul, conclude that more than anything else on this earth, we desire more knowledge of Jesus and more fellowship with Jesus. As we draw closer to God through the facilitation of Jesus, may we place everything else in its proper perspective and comparing it next to Jesus, resolve that it does not compare and it is equated more with garbage.

DRESSING LIKE GOD
Ephesians 4:20-24

March 18, 2023

In an effort to be like their parents, many children will take off the things that represent who they are like their hats, shoes and coats and put on the hats, shoes and coats of their parents in representation of who their parents are. Clearly, the child knows that he is not his father. Nevertheless, when the child puts on his father's clothes, he is putting on the likeness of his father and thereby embodying all of the attributes of what it means to be his father.

Paul pressed the church in Ephesus to know the importance of transitioning from their former life to their new life in Jesus. He urged them to know that they were created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, Paul charged them to take off the things that represented who they were and be renewed in their spirit by putting on the new person God created them to be and thereby embodying all of the attributes of God.

Many of us have discarded the clothes that represented who we were in our past; who we were before we were saved. Just as we no longer wear our old clothes physically, Paul is likewise charging us not to wear our old clothes – who we were before Jesus – spiritually. As my desire is to be like God in true righteousness, I need to take off what represents me and clothe myself in what it means to be like God and thereby embody all of the attributes of God.



*He leads me in the paths of righteousness for
His name's sake.*

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS
(JEHOVAH TSIDKENU)

LED TO DO THE RIGHT THING
Psalm 23: 3

March 12, 2023

Perhaps one of the primary burdens of our humanity is our humanity – we are human. As humans, we do horrible things. Husbands abuse their wives. Parents abuse their children. Children abuse their parents. Priests sexually abuse children. Humans steal, murder, cheat and offend other humans. Left in our humanity, humans can be terrible. In contrast, one of the praiseworthy blessings of God is God's righteousness. In our world where humans are doing horrible and terrible things, we can trust our righteous God to have justice, honesty, rightness, integrity and other righteous attributes.

We can counter the horrible and terrible burdens of our humanity when we submit to God, the shepherd, to lead us in the path of righteousness. To lead us away from the selfish and self-destructive paths of our humanity to paths that reflect the just, honest, right and integrity-filled paths of God.

People are often encouraged to "Do what feels right". From God's perspective, this is not Godly advice. Nowhere in God's word are we encouraged to emphasize our feelings. Rather than doing what feels right, our shepherd desires to lead us in paths that promote doing what is right. Our accountability to God is not based upon what we think or what we feel. Rather, it is based upon what we do. God desires that we do the right thing.

In Ephesians 5:1, Paul wrote, ¹ *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.* Our shepherd is Jehovah Tsidkenu, the LORD our righteousness. Therefore, Imitate God, your shepherd, as you are lead to do the right thing.

GOD'S JUSTICE AND JUDGMENTS ARE RIGHT **March 13, 2023**
Jeremiah 23:1-6

When responding to service that we receive, the binary choices are either, “Woe” (when we are dissatisfied) or “Wow” (when we are satisfied and pleased). ‘Woe’ and ‘Wow’ express opposite extremes of response. Whereas we lament when we express, “Woe” with the waiter, hairdresser or mechanic when the service is woefully inadequate. What a joyful relief when we express, “Wow” in the same environments for wowfully satisfactory service.

God expressed woes to the earthy shepherd/leaders of Israel. Instead of leading God’s sheep/people to peaceful green pastures and calm, still waters, they destroyed, scattered and failed to attend to them. After God announced to personally gather the remnant of God’s sheep, restore them back to their sheepfolds and bless them, God promised to set up shepherds over them who would care for them. God also promised to raise up the Messiah to shepherd God’s sheep with wisdom, justice and righteousness. To affirm this, God said that the Messiah’s name will be called, “The LORD Our Righteousness” (Jehovah Tsidkenu). Praise God for the wowfully satisfactory service.

Praise God the Messiah has come. Praise God the Messiah shepherds us with wisdom, justice and righteousness. Praise God our shepherd never disappoints us nor dissatisfies us. Praise God our shepherd’s justice and judgments are always right. Praise God when we reflect on the shepherding of our Messiah, we express, “Wow” for wowfully satisfactory service to us.

APPEAL TO THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE **March 14, 2023**
Psalms 35:19-25

I accompanied a member of the congregation as she appeared before a municipal court judge. Almost immediately, the judge showed his bias against her. He did not permit evidence from her nor permit me to speak on her behalf. He turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to the truth she attempted to share and refused to receive anything to help her in her pursuit of justice. Although we wrote a letter expressing dissatisfaction to the presiding judge, more importantly, we appealed her case to the righteous judge.

David was wronged by his enemies. Although he did not specify what wrong was done, he strongly asserted his innocence. In his pursuit for justice, he appealed his case to the righteous judge. In his appeal, David first affirmed that God saw everything. Since God saw, God would be an eyewitness to his innocence. Second, although David would never accuse God of sleeping, out of his pain and desire for relief he petitioned God to wake up, come near and speak on his behalf to vindicate him according to God’s righteousness.

At times, it is hard to find justice. Although we are innocent, accusations, lies and distortions of the truth place burdens upon us that are heavy to bear. Praise God we can appeal our case to our righteous judge. Our judge sees everything and is an eyewitness to our innocence. Since God never sleeps, when we call, God comes near and speaks on our behalf to vindicate us according to God’s righteousness.

TOO GOOD TO KEEP TO YOURSELF **March 15, 2023**
Psalms 40:9, 10

A local home improvement store had a fantastic sale on mulch. We took advantage of the sale and purchased enough mulch to meet the needs at our house. As we were not satisfied only receiving the benefit of the sale ourselves, we texted our siblings the good news of the details of the sale so they could also benefit. Good news should always be shared with others.

David personally received the benefits of God’s righteousness and it blessed him significantly. The blessings, however, were too great and too good to keep to himself. Therefore, David proclaimed the good news of God’s righteousness in the great assembly. As David was not satisfied only receiving the benefits himself, he opened his mouth and his heart and shared God’s righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, lovingkindness and truth with everyone. David ensured the good news was shared with others.

Have you personally received the benefits and blessings of God’s righteousness? As you consider them, do you acknowledge that they are too great and too good to keep to yourself? Know that there is someone who is currently in your sphere of influence who needs to know the good news of God’s righteousness. They need to know about God’s faithfulness, salvation, lovingkindness and truth. They need to know, and who better than you to tell them. Open your mouth and your heart and share the good news of God’s righteousness with someone. Good news should always be shared with others.

RIGHT IS WHAT GOD SAYS IS RIGHT **March 16, 2023**
Romans 10:1-4

I discovered when I coached 6th graders in softball that many of them were ignorant of the official softball rules. Although they enjoyed playing the game, they were ignorant of the rules. Therefore, they established their own rules. Whereas their rules would be fine if they confined their playing to their backyards, as they were playing in an organized league, they needed to know and follow the rules established in the Softball Official Rulebook.

Israel was zealous for God, however, their zeal was without knowledge. Because they were ignorant of God’s righteousness, they established their own righteousness and did not submit to God’s righteousness. Their own righteousness would have been fine if they had created their own world in which to live. Nevertheless, since they were living in God’s world, God had the authority to establish the standards for righteousness. Even more, since Jesus was the fulfillment of the law so that there may be righteousness, all who believed in Jesus were made right with God.

We, like Israel, do not have our own world in which to live. Therefore, we cannot establish our own righteousness. We cannot establish for ourselves what is right and wrong or make ourselves right with God. Praise God when we believe in Jesus – that is, confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead – we are saved and made right with God.