**Changing the Way We Think**

Get Over Yourself

This morning I want to continue in our topic of changing the way we think. We have been looking at what it means to allow God to help us in our thought life. There is a crazy battle that transpires between our two ears and we can find either peace, hope or rest there, or we can find great turmoil, helplessness and condemnation. The reason why what we think matters is because it manifests itself in how you live.

Are you living with hope in your heart because of Jesus? Or are you living doubt and self hatred? We you thriving in life? Or do you find yourself living in defeat without any sense of victory? The battle of the mind matters.

Last week, we looked at the issue of fear. How do you view God? Do you see him with eyes of fear and dread that pulls you away from him? Or do you see him with eyes of awe and respect, or wonder and worship that draws you closer to him?

* **Many people still have an unhealthy fear of God that keeps them away from him, when the reality is that Jesus has made a way for man to come close to him.**

Paul tells us in **Romans 8:15**:

*15So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children.\* Now we call him, “Abba, Father.”*

*16So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.* **Hebrews 4:16**

Even as followers of Jesus, we too can remain stuck in fear, forgetting about what Jesus did for us; forgetting the full extent of what it has given us. The enemy of our soul likes to keep us in fear so that we don’t draw close to God, that we would keep him at a distance and not experience the full abundant life that he has promised us.

That is why we need to put in Jesus, each and every day; put on the armor of God:

* Jesus, the way the truth and life
* Jesus who declares us righteous by faith
* Jesus who is our Prince of peace
* Jesus who Author and finisher of our faith
* Jesus who is our salvation
* Jesus who is the Word who became flesh – who gave us the sword of the Spirit.

Followers of Jesus who live in fear have forgotten who Jesus is, what he has done, and what he promises to do. Followers in fear have allowed the enemy to whisper in their ears and twist the scriptures just enough to keep them feeling condemned. Followers in fear focus too much on themselves and what they do instead of on Jesus and what he has done. And that is what I want to expound upon this morning.

* **Much of the battle in our mind is the result of being too consumed with ourselves and not enough with Jesus.**

The Apostle Paul was very much aware of the challenges of being too self-consumed and self-focused. He called it a battle with the flesh. In **Romans 7:18-25** Paul writes:

*8And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature (my flesh).\* I want to do what is right, but I can’t. 19I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. 20But if I do what I don’t want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. 21I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. 22I love God’s law with all my heart. 23But there is another power\* within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. 24Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? 25Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

There is another power that wages war with my mind called the flesh. Our sinful nature likes to remain self-focused, self-gratifying, self-obsessed.

* **The flesh gives us two extremes: an inferiority complex or a superiority complex.** 
  + With the inferiority complex it leaves us feeling obsessed, oppressed or depressed. We keep putting ourselves down, we keep heaping judgment on ourselves, we keep beating ourselves up and believe that God wants nothing to do with us – a mess.
  + With the superiority complex it leaves us arrogant and proud, religious and unloving. We think of ourselves as better than we are and we see no need for Jesus. Instead of seeing a relationship with Jesus as a privilege we see it as a right. We can’t believe that God wouldn’t want anything to do with us because we are who we are. We become self-absorbed and everything is based on what we want.

Paul tells us that there is a war with the flesh that takes place in the mind. We either give into our feelings or thoughts of low self-worth or we cater the ravaging beast within the wants what it wants. Can we agree that being self-focused is not a good place to be? Amen. Paul tells us in **Galatians 5:24-25**:

*24Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. 25Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.*

Our flesh has been taken cared of at the cross.

* **Today we find release to live a new and different kind of life – one that is led by the Spirit of God.**

That means that the focus of our lives is no longer to be self-focused but Christ-focused. Because of what Jesus did on the cross, because we belong to Jesus, we are not able to live different lives. Paul speaks of this just the verses before in **Galatians 5:22-23**:

*22But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, and self-control.*

Who produces this fruit? Who is able to change us from the inside out? The Holy Spirit. Instead of remaining pre-occupied with ourselves, when we focus on Jesus and all that he has done and given to us, we can begin to live a different life. 2 Corinthians puts it this way (**2 Corinthians 3:16, 18**):

*16But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*

*18So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.*

In other words, the more we focus on Jesus the more we are changed. Too often we think that we do the changing through our efforts (if we pray more, fast more, do more). But change happens when we take our eyes off of ourselves and put them on Jesus.

* **The more we see Jesus the more we are changed.**

We find a great illustration of this in the gospel of Luke. Jesus was crucified and put in a tomb. Two of his disciples decide to head to a town called Emmaus, just 7 miles outside of Jerusalem. They had witnessed the murder of their leader, they had betrayed him and I am sure were experiencing shame. They had heard that the tomb was empty the morning they left, but they were still heading out of town because they didn’t quite believe that Jesus had come back to life that morning.

As they are walking Jesus appears to them, but they don’t recognize him. It is clear that they were focused on themselves due to their response to Jesus’ question. **Luke 24:19-24** we read:

*“The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,” they said. “He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. 20But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. 21We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.”*

It clear that they had their own idea of who Jesus was and what he was to do. Church, sometimes we in our own self-centered and self-focused lives tend to have our own idea of how things should be and how they should play out. And sometimes it is to be done only for our benefit. These disciples had their own idea of what Jesus was supposed to do. We too can fall into this trap, Amen. Jesus responds to them in verse 25-26 (**Luke 24:25-26**):

*25Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. 26Wasn’t it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?”*

The word “foolish” here is not the same word that Jesus used when addressing the religious people of the day. He was not calling them stupid or dull. The word here means “not understanding and unwise.” The disciples were so stuck in their own ideas that they failed to see that what was happening was in accordance with the scriptures. We see a great example of this when Paul writes in **Romans 10:3-4**:

*3For they don’t understand God’s way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God’s way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. 4For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given.\* As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.*

Don’t we do the same thing? We are so stuck in our own ideas that we leave no room for God to show us what he is doing? But notice what Jesus does next with the disciples. It tells us in **Luke 24:27**:

*27Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

For seven miles Jesus goes all the way back to Genesis and the first five books of the Bible, then he goes through books like Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. He shows them how the scriptures reveal him. He is right there with them, but they can’t see it. Not until verse 31 do we read that their eyes are opened and they knew him. Why weren’t they able to see Jesus? They were so pre-occupied with themselves that they failed to see Jesus. But Jesus used the Scriptures to open their eyes, and he does the same today.

The disciples were so impacted that they walked back to Jerusalem the same day, another 7 miles, making 14 miles total. Perhaps their new revelation of Jesus, their change of focus off of themselves and onto Jesus gave them a new found strength.

What step can we take to become more focused on Jesus? I believe…

* **One way that we can get over ourselves is to worship God.**

We see this in the life of David, over and over again. In fact the book of Psalms is full of David’s words of worship. Many times we read of how he is in despair, in trouble, hopeless and lost, but he spins his songs around and ends with a greater perspective of who God is. Whenever David was in crisis, he went to God in worship. **Psalm 34:1-4** is a great example. David was being hunted down by King Saul, and the King of Gath to avenge the death of Goliath, and was hiding in a cave. In the midst this trial he writes the following words:

*I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises. 2I will boast only in the Lord; let all who are helpless take heart. 3Come, let us tell of the Lord’s greatness; let us exalt his name together. 4I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears.*

Instead of remaining focused on himself, David found great comfort in looking to God. We read of another time when King David’s own son is was trying to take over the throne. David flees with tears and a broken heart, being betrayed by his own flesh and blood. And yet David writes in **Psalm 3:3-4**:

*3But you, O Lord, are a shield around me; you are my glory, the one who holds my head high. 4I cried out to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy mountain.*

There is something about worship that puts things back into proper perspective. Worship focuses on what God says and what God sees. Worship allows to magnify God which in turn makes everything else smaller. Worship allows us to focus on God’s abilities instead of our own. Worship allows us to rely on God’s strength instead of our limited resources. The more we worship God, sing his praises, declare his greatness, proclaim his promises, the less we remain focused on our flesh; our frailty, our inability, our arrogance, and our rebellion.

God calls us to get over ourselves – stop being self-consumed. Instead he wants us to find new life in him. We rely too much on ourselves. We need the revelation of God’s Word, we need a deeper understanding of his grace and love, and we need to see Jesus because only he can make a difference in us. Amen. Let’s pray!