

Sermon: Saved for Relationship – May 8, 2016 (Scripture is from the ESV)

Location: New Philadelphia Church, Hongdae Campus – 11am service

Greeting

Good morning, Hongdae! My name is John-Michael, and I'm the campus pastor of New Philly Sillim. It's a joy to be here this Sunday, which happens to be Parents Day here in Korea. My wife Sky's parents are both members at the Sillim campus and are watching this sermon. 어머니, 아버지, 사랑해요!

Introduction

I want to start this message with a story I heard from our friend Kirk Bennett. He shared about a particular meeting Mike Bickle of Kansas City had with a certain man many years ago at a restaurant. This man had a strong spiritual gift of seeing in the spiritual realm.

Mike and this man were meeting for a meal together for the first time and the waitress had just brought them their food. The man then asked Mike if it would be okay if they moved to the other side of the restaurant. Mike was a little confused, but said okay. They picked up their dishes and silverware and drinks and moved them all to a far table in the corner and started to eat. Mike then asked the man, "Why did we do that?" The man replied, "Well, our waitress has kidney problems and every time she walks by I get this terrible pain in my back. And that woman over there is going through a divorce and there is heavy depression over her and the atmosphere was making it hard for me to eat." Mike responded, "Okay... well, why don't we go pray for them?" And the man said, "No, you don't understand, if we pray for them then that person will get delivered and then a whole crowd will gather because of that power encounter and things will get too intense for me to handle and it will be really distracting and tiring and it won't work right." So Mike responded, "Well, why do you think God told you those things then?" The man then looked down for a moment and said, "Well, it's because we're friends. Friends tell friends stuff. It doesn't mean He wants me to do something. We're friends."

When I heard that story I wasn't expecting that man's response at the end. I've served in different ministries for the past fifteen years and my mindset was always, "Serve serve serve, respond respond respond." But God has been correcting me of this mindset. God's greatest priority for me, and for each of you, is so much more simple and peaceful than my servant mindset.

Today I want to speak about God's greatest priority for our life. The title of today's sermon is, "Saved for Relationship."

Cripple at the Gate

Please open your Bibles to Acts chapter 3. In the first chapter of Acts Jesus spoke to His disciples before going up to heaven. In Acts chapter two we read about Pentecost and the Holy Spirit falling in power upon the disciples and 3,000 people being saved. We read about the early church and how unified they were in all things. The church was growing and meeting regularly at the temple and at their homes.

This leads us to Acts chapter 3, with Peter and John going to the temple at the usual hour of prayer. I'll read verses one through ten...

Acts 3:1-10 – Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.” And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

This is a beautiful passage of a powerful healing of a man who was crippled from birth. This man had been laid daily at the gate of the temple seeking simply his daily bread through the small donations of those entering the temple. And up to this point in his life, God had provided just enough for him. Every day the alms that he collected had been enough for him to feed himself and live another day. Praise God for that! And here Peter and John focus on the cripple and God’s healing is released into him and he is able to rise and walk! It’s a beautiful story!

But if you zoom out a little, you’ll notice this crippled man had been at the same temple that Peter and John had been entering day after day. And this was the same temple that Jesus had also entered all His life, to teach and to worship God. This crippled man from birth had watched Jesus enter so many times before His crucifixion. And yet for some reason Jesus never healed him. And for some reason neither did Peter nor John nor any of the other disciples heal him, up until this chapter. So, why didn’t Jesus or his disciples heal this man sooner? Did they not love Him?

Last week Pastor Marcus preached a message, “The Cost of Change” from John chapter 5, about Jesus healing one of the cripples at the pool called Bethesda. John chapter 5 describes there being a “multitude” of blind, lame, and paralyzed people lying around the pool. A multitude! Yet Jesus only chose one man among the many to heal.

Why did Jesus choose to heal just one? Did He not love the others? Was He not strong enough? Is He truly good? What was Jesus’ true priority?

I doubt Jesus ignored the cripple at the temple when he entered day after day. In fact Jesus always encouraged His disciples to give to the poor and they likely gave alms to this same cripple. But Jesus never healed him, just as He didn’t heal the other blind, lame, and paralyzed in John 5. So why didn’t He?

Shortly after healing that one lame man at the pool in John 5, Jesus explained Himself in John 5:19-20...

John 5:19-20: So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. **For the Father loves the Son** and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.”

The Key

This may surprise you, but Jesus' top priority wasn't healings or miracles. Jesus loved the other blind, lame, and paralyzed people just as He loves all men and women on earth. But Jesus' top priority wasn't people. His top priority wasn't ministry or work. His top priority wasn't Himself. Jesus' top priority was His relationship with God. **Jesus lived to be in relationship with God.** And this relationship wasn't a working relationship. Rather, it was a loving relationship. Jesus said clearly in verse 20, "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing." God revealed these miracles and these works not out of a boss/employee relationship, but rather out of love and connection with Jesus.

This introduces an important truth about God: God's greatest priority is not healings or miracles or other powerful works; **God's greatest priority is relationship.** God wants relationship with us. The works are wonderful, but we don't read about angels or Jesus responding with delight to the miracles. They were used to the supernatural and it didn't surprise them. Instead, the angels and Jesus rejoiced whenever a sinner repented and turned to God. Redeemed relationships are God's true joy. **Connection with God, relationship with Him, is what stirs His heart the most.**

Pastor Marcus preached last week that the key for getting true healing and change in our life is walking it out with God. We need to keep connected with God through the process. Our relationship with God must be our greatest priority. If we cannot keep connected to Him, then the change will not be complete. Relationship is key!

I've recently been reading the book Chasing the Dragon by Jackie Pullinger. It is about her work with drug addicts and gang members in Hong Kong. Jackie Pullinger discovered a key for opium and heroin addicts to be able to completely break their addiction and to break it without pain. And that key was speaking in tongues. She would lead these drug addicts on the streets to Christ and then bring them to her rehabilitation centers. There they would pray for the drug addicts and the drug addicts would receive the gift of tongues. Whenever the drug addicts would feel the torments of the withdrawal symptoms, they would speak in tongues and the pain would subside. But for the stubborn addicts who were too proud to speak in tongues, the withdrawal pains would shake them and torment them until either they spoke in tongues or they ran away from the center to get more drugs.

Speaking in tongues is a gift from God that connects us with God. When we are fully connected to Him, and continue to be connected to Him, the enemy has no grip on us. As the former addicts learned to walk with God and have relationship with Him, the pain and the sinful habits from their past gradually faded away. Connecting with God is powerful! Beholding Him changes our lives! Don't focus on your pain. Don't focus on the world. Focus on Him! Look to God! Connect with Him!

God's Greatest Purpose is to Connect

But God's purpose in connecting with us isn't just for us for salvation, healing, and deliverance. And it isn't just for miracles or ministry. **The truth is God's greatest purpose in connecting with us is to know us and to be known by us.** God didn't save us because of pity. God didn't save us so that we could be His workers. **God saved us for relationship.**

Not every word from God is meant to be a command. God is not a critic watching us from afar. God isn't an audience member watching your life. God is all around you. And if you've

declared He is your Savior, then He lives within you. God desires intimacy with you, which is why He has given us His Holy Spirit to live within you.

I want to read to you Hosea 2:14-17. This is a passage about the people of God, Israel, had been unfaithful to God. But despite their unfaithfulness, God speaks these words of Israel...

Hosea 2:14-17 – Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she will answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. And in the day, declares the Lord, you will call me “My Husband” and no longer will you call me “My Baal.” For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more.

In verse 16 God says, “You will call me, ‘My Husband’ and no longer will you call me, ‘My Baal.’” Baal in Hebrew translates to, “Master.” Almost every other translation reads, “You will call me ‘my husband,’ you will never again call me, ‘My master.’”

The relationship God desires with us is not a working relationship. It is a loving relationship. It is a relationship that is meant to be free of fear and burden.

In my marriage I don’t have to perform out of fear that my wife Sky will no longer love me if I don’t do enough. I don’t have to worry that she is going to leave me or judge me based upon my works. Why? **Because she pledged herself to me!** She pledged herself to me, so I don’t need to fear! How did those vows go? “I, Sky Kim, take you, John-Michael Becker, as my lawful wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and health, until death do us part.” Did any part of that vow include a performance clause for me? Was it, “I take you as my husband **if** you live up to these requirements?” Was it, “I give this ring as a seal of my commitment to you... **if** you do really well?”

No. Love is a choice. **And covenant love is a commitment not based on receiving, but rather giving.** Love is not selfish. Love is not demanding. Love keeps no record of wrongs.

I do things for my wife because I love her. I don’t do things for her because I fear her or I fear losing her. I trust my wife, and so I have peace and joy when I am with her. God wants this same relationship with us. He wants us to call Him, “My husband.” He wants to be our closest companion. He wants to know us through and through and He wants for us to know Him through and through. God desires relationship. God doesn’t want us to fear Him judging us or leaving us. God doesn’t want a bunch of works. God wants relationship.

When I visit my family in America I try and do things to help out around the house. But my dad always says, “You don’t need to do that, son. Let’s just be together.” When I go visit America my dad’s first thought isn’t, “Oh great, now I don’t have to mow the lawn because my son is home.” No! My dad’s first thought is, “My son is home! I can’t wait to be with him!”

Recently my younger sister Laura and her husband adopted a baby in Virginia. My sister lives in Maryland, but because the baby was born in Virginia they cannot take the baby out of the state until the adoption is completely finalized which takes some time. So for the first month of the baby’s life my sister and her husband have been living with my parents in

Virginia. And my parents are so happy! My dad expressed to me, “I am so happy that Laura is home with us. I can’t wait to get home from work each day just to be with her and see her emotions and experience caring for the baby together.”

That’s God’s heart for us. God can’t wait to be with you. He loves to experience life with you. His greatest priority is relationship with us.

Sarah Yang’s story

I have another story for you to demonstrate how God’s greatest priority isn’t works or ministry, but rather relationship. At our Niagara Conference way back in 2010, our guest speaker Sarah Yang shared this story during her seminar...

A friend of hers who God was doing great signs and wonders through was asked to be a guest speaker in another city at a conference. Everything in his ministry had been going great and he had such an anointing that anyone he prayed for would be wrecked by the Holy Spirit. He went to the conference feeling really good about himself. He was anointed, people were impressed with him, and he was the guest speaker.

During the conference though, he kept hearing trumpets sound at different times... even though no one in the conference had a trumpet and the timing was always odd. Soon he realized that whenever a certain man entered the conference room, the trumpets would sound. Where these trumpets were he couldn’t figure out. But he wanted to meet this man. He asked a member of the conference team to set up a meeting between him and the man.

They met at a coffee shop, and sure enough, just as the man entered the coffee shop the sound of trumpets announcing his arrival could be heard. Sarah’s friend was amazed. He immediately asked the man about the trumpets. The man responded sheepishly, “Oh, the trumpets?” And he went into the story. The man told Sarah’s friend how one day he was studying John 15:15 about how Jesus calls us friends. The revelation that God calls us friends hit him deep and he proclaimed to God that he would try and be the best friend he could be to God. This man had a full time job and a family to take care of, so his schedule was pretty busy. But he chose to wake up earlier, at 4am, so he could spend time with God before having to get ready and leave for work at 6am. Every day he would wake up early and go into another room and sit in a rocking chair next to an empty chair and he would talk with God like he would with a good friend. He would share with God about his work, about sports, and about the weather. He would talk with God as his friend. And he continued to do this each day.

Then one day, during his time with God, he heard the door to the room open. He figured his wife had come to join him. He heard footsteps come behind him and then a hand rested on his shoulder. He looked over at the hand and realized it wasn’t his wife, but it was Jesus. He could see the mark on His hand. Teardrops began to fall from Jesus onto his shoulder. And Jesus spoke, “I wish I had more friends like you.”

He said that from that day on whenever he would enter a room trumpets would sound. Angels were announcing his arrival. God was honoring him as a close friend.

This man was not a full time minister and he did not save thousands of souls. But he was a friend of God and God treasured him.

God longs for a deeper relationship with each and every one of you. God wants to talk with you. He wants so much more than just obedience, He wants to know your emotions. He wants to reveal Himself to you. He wants you to pursue Him! He is always speaking!

God is longing for you day and night. He longs to speak with you during the day and to speak with you through the night. Did you know if live 60 years and sleep 8 hours a day, that you will have spent 20 years of your life sleeping? God isn't absent from you during all that time sleeping. God loves to speak in dreams. God wants to meet you in every aspect of your life. But God doesn't force Himself on you. He wants you to ask. He wants you to seek. He wants you to find. While Jesus didn't heal every blind, lame, or paralyzed person in the pool, **He did heal every single person who asked to be healed.** God is not far off. He near to all who call upon Him.

We need to be asking for God to speak to us. We need to be asking for dreams. We need to be talking to God and connecting with Him. If you have the gift of tongues you should be practicing it. You might not feel anything in the physical, but in the spirit you are connecting with God!

I want to close with the first words of Jesus after His resurrection. In both Matthew 28 and John 20 we read of Jesus first appearing to some women who had come to the empty tomb. Let me read Matthew 28:9-10 to you, his first words after His resurrection...

Matthew 28:9-10 – And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my **brothers** to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.

This was the first time in all the Gospels that Jesus referred to the disciples as brothers. Jesus had called them disciples and even friends, but this was the first time He declared them to be family. **It was Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross that made us family with Him.** Before the Cross we could not enter God's presence because of our sin. But through the Cross, the veil blocking us from God was torn from the top to the bottom. It was torn not by human hands or human works, but rather by the grace of God.

It is God's grace that enables us to have intimacy with Him. We don't have to perform to earn His favor. We don't have to strive to be touched by Him. We just need to ask. We just need to be in His presence. We just need to rest before Him. God longs for you. He will not deny you. **You were saved for relationship.**

Pray

Pray and prophesy a release of dreams and encounter