

Easter Faith and Focus

Guided Growth with Pastor Keith @ CBC Easter Sunday Apr 6

It's easy to get caught up in the Tyranny of the temporary: To feel stuck in a particularly challenging or confusing season. (Ecc. 3:1-11) Each life will pass through several seasons before God's purposes can be clearly understood and completely accomplished. (1 Cor 13:12)

That's why 1 Cor 4:5 tells us to *"judge nothing before the time."* Forgetting this truth was at the heart of much of the misery the disciples faced 2000 years ago. During the last supper he revealed that he was the fulfillment of the Passover memorial. (Mt 26:26-28)

What the disciples thought would be a celebrated of victory and a time of joy, anticipation and praise, suddenly turned into an evening of doubt, disappointment and distress.

Passover became the backdrop to remind them that:

1. God orchestrates events for our good *and His Glory!* (Ro. 8:28,29)

He's always at work to bring beauty out of ashes. (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:18; Ro. 8:28,29)

A. In our frustrations, fears and failures it's easy to judge prematurely.

We tend to judge the man *by the moment*; the day *by the disaster*; the week *by the worry*; the month *by the moment*; and the life *by the loss!* (Eccl. 3:1-10)

1) The Scriptures are filled with examples of people *passing through* painful seasons.

Adam and Eve in Gen. 3; Noah in Gen 6-8; Abraham and Sarah in Gen.12-25; Jacob Gen. 25-49; Joseph Gen. 30-50; Moses Ex. 2-Deut. 34; David 1 Sam. 30; 1 Chron 12; Israel (Passover Ex. 1-13) Jesus! Heb. 5:6-9; 12:3,4; and the Disciples on Easter Sunday! Lk 24:25-32

2. After the Passover meal Jesus reminded them of this:

A. The Bad news (*The fires that would produce their "ashes"*)

- 1) One of them would betray him. (Mt 26:21; John 13:18-21)
- 2) He would be killed because he was God's Passover lamb. (Mt 26:26-28)
- 3) Each of them would be offended in him and forsake him. (Mt 26:31; 56)
- 4) Peter would deny that he even knew him "three times" (Mt 26:34; John 13:37,38)
- 5) Satan would use the fires of these events to "sift" them. (Luke 22:31)

B. The Good news (*The Beauty that could come from the ashes*)

God is preparing them (and us!) (Lk 22:32; Jn 17; Romans 8:28,29; 1 Pt 1:7)

1) Jesus' Example: Jn 16:20-22 "... *And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again...*"

2) Jesus' Encouragement: John 14:1 "*let not your heart be troubled.*" (tarassō: agitated)

How can our hearts not be troubled when we are in a world under the sway of evil and are conflicted in our own carnal flesh between God's will and our own...

When our dreams turn into nightmares *before they finally "die"*?

3. Jesus' instruction about how to transition from the ashes of our disappointment to the beauty of God's design! John 14:1

Jesus' solution to troubled times is to:

A. Our Faith "*believe in God*". "Believe" (pisteuō): to trust and commit.

1) We need Faith in:

- a) Who He is. "*In my father's house...*" vs 2, 4-7 "*and yet hast thou not known me...?*"
- b) What He does. "*I go to prepare a place for you.*" vs 2,3 16:17 "*It is expedient that I go away*"
- c) What He says. (His Word) vs 15,16 "*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.... Because I live, ye shall live also.*" See also vs 15-21 and Romans 10:17

2) Such Faith is forged in the fires of doubt, disappointment, and even disaster. (Is. 43:1-5; 48:10,11; Daniel 3:17,18; 1 Peter 1:7; Ps. 42)

B. Our Focus (on the eternal) Mt 6:33 *“it came to pass”* is found 453 X in the Bible!

2 Cor 4:16-18 *“While we look (skopeo: take aim at, focus) not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*

1) Paul understood this force of faith and focus. Phil. 3:8-14 *“... that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after... Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

Conclusion

Phil. 3:15 *“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, (teleios: complete, mature) be thus minded.*

16...*let us walk by the same rule, let us mind (phroneo: focus, regard, value) the same thing.”*

The disciples were initially “minding” their own things, rather than God’s. Such a temporary focus will inevitably bring disappointment, disillusionment, and ultimately disaster. Phil. 3:18-20

“For many walk, .. (as) enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, (apōleia: ruin, waste) whose god is their belly, ... who mind (phroneo: regard) earthly things. For our conversation is in heaven!”

In spite of ignoring Jesus’ repeated warnings, (John 12:24-25; Mt 16:24-27; Gal. 2:20,21)

that first Easter was a beautiful illustration of how Jesus uses our Faith & Focus to bring

“beauty out of ashes... Joy out of mourning... Praise out of heaviness. That they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.” (Is. 61:3) God’s committed to Growing us!

Trees of righteousness grow over many seasons! The more distressing the season, the deeper the roots! The Disciples should have realized that they were simply passing through territory that’s filled with Satan’s snares and familiar to all who must learn to *“walk by faith, not by sight.”* 2 Cor 5:7
Satan understands this process and seeks to trap us in the “Tyranny of the Temporary”.

Application:

Are you trapped in the tyranny of your Personal Priorities, Pride, and/or (temporary) Perspective?

God’s Grace and Peace are just as available to you as they were to his disciples on that first Easter!

Jn 14:27 *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you...: Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”*

God’s Peace is a biproduct of shifting our Faith and Focus so we can partner with God’s Priorities and Perspective.

Will you join Him?

Easter reminds us that Faith and Focus involves a journey that includes a “Cross”

But leads to a Crown!

2 Tim. 4:6-8 *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”*