**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 8-2-2020 – How to Know the Will of God**

It is hard for me to believe that it was 20 years ago that I graduated from High School. Where do the years go? You probably wonder similar things yourself.

But while we realize that time does fly, we also celebrate that in Christ we are eternally alive! Amen!!

But for most of my growing up years I had a best friend named Jon. And I remember the summer after graduation we spent a good bit of time together, but we knew that as the summer was winding down, we both knew that things were going to be different pretty soon.

I was going off to college, right nearby at Messiah College. And I would be opening myself up to the transformations that would be a part of that choice.

And Jon was going to Parris Island, for he had enlisted in the Marines.

And I remember we corresponded several times through letters during his months in boot camp, as he was being transformed into a soldier.

And for any of you that have served in our armed forces, thank you for your service. You know firsthand what it is like to experience that time of transformation through your training.

The truth is that we are all being transformed in one way or another. We can’t help but experience change in this world.

Sometimes transformation is forced on us. None of us probably expected the transformation to have masks as part of our attire this year.

But the good news is that each of us have a choice on how we as a person will be transformed.

What transformation process are you and I choosing?

And here is some more good news, if we choose wisely on how to be transformed, we can actually get to know God’s will better and better. That’s pretty amazing.

Now transformation is a process. For soldiers, a big part of that process is boot camp and getting adjusted to life as a soldier.

I think of the caterpillar transforming into a butterfly. It is the same creature, but the transformation is so profound that we call it a different name. That’s amazing.

At one point the caterpillar forms a chrysalis and spends days within it experiencing transformation. And when they emerge, we call them butterflies.

They needed to go through that process. In fact, there is DNA that lies dormant within this creature until it is activated as a butterfly. In a sense, while they are still the same creature, their emerging from the chrysalis makes them a new creation.

But butterflies still need to learn to fly. This takes practice and intentionality on their part. They must choose to develop the habit of learning to fly if it is going to thrive in its life as a butterfly.

This all reminds me of what Christ invites us to by following after him. As we respond to his invitation and choose to follow him, whether we realize it or not, we are entering God’s spiritual chrysalis as we surrender our lives to Jesus our Savior.

But as we seek to live for Jesus as our Lord and Master and King, we must choose to step out in obedience to his leading in our lives.

When we come to faith in Christ, we are made new creations. We may look the same on the outside, but we are made spiritually alive within.

God tells us in His Word that *Christians have the mind of Christ*. Ponder that for a moment, you and I have the mind of Christ. We are called to think like Christ.

Paul told the Christians in Corinth that they have the mind of Christ. And many of these Christians were rather immature in the faith. Having the mind of Christ was not something that they acquired by their efforts, but by receiving Jesus and their Savior. When someone receives Christ, the Spirit of Christ --- the Holy Spirit – comes to live within them. And so they have the mind of Christ. They can begin to think like Christ.

The challenge though, is learning to understand what it means to have the mind of Christ. And this is a process. This takes effort.

Please turn with me to Romans 12:1-2

**12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your** **bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

We see in this passage a 2-step process to knowing God’s will. First, we must give our lives to Christ. Without receiving the Savior, we cannot grasp God’s will for us.

But the second step is choosing to renew our minds to think with the mind of Christ, rather than to think like the world.

What we put in our system affects us. As much as I like donuts, I know that if I only ate donuts, it would not be very good for my system, my body.

And what we choose to focus our mind on is far more important than what we put in our bodies.

In our world today we can be inundated with thoughts through TV and the internet and other forms of media. The goal of those things is to try to get us to think a certain way.

Those that control those things seek to form a lens by which we see. They seek to conform our minds in a certain way.

We have a choice to let our minds be renewed by those words, or by His Word (hold up on Bible).

The Bible is God’s inspired Word and through placing ourselves under it each day we begin to think from the mind of Christ within us. And like the mustard seed, before we know it, we begin to think like Christ and to know God’s will on many things much more fully.

This is a critical foundation for the kingdom of God. God’s goal is not merely for us to get into His Word, but for His Word to get into us. When that happens, we begin to carry God’s Word with us everywhere we go.

A few weeks ago, I shared some of my story, some of my testimony. And even though I was a Christian for a number of years, one major part of the kingdom of God growing in my life was as I learned to love God’s Word.

I began to see His Word has a love letter to me and as an invitation to know Him better.

While knowing God’s Word transforms us is so important, I want to share 2 more thoughts on this foundation of God’s Kingdom.

**First, we must always read God’s Word with a humble and teachable mind**. That is what we were made for. Unfortunately, there are many people that place themselves over the Bible and try to get the Bible to say what they want it to say.

But as we see to live out the mind of Christ, we must always place ourselves under the authority that God gives to Scripture. We must read it with a desire to grow and learn and be transformed.

**Second, it is very important to speak the truth of God’s Word over ourselves**. We need to do this to help convince ourselves of who God says that we are. And as we do this, the Lord will begin to replace lies, that we’ve believed in, with His truth. He will help us to see God and ourselves and others more clearly.

Believe it or not, this is actually a form of warfare that God wants us to engage in. He does not call us to be pacifists here.

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 we read the following:

**For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**

What is Paul writing about? He knows that even though Christians have the mind of Christ, our spiritual enemy will stop at nothing to try to get us to think contrary to the mind of Christ. He seeks to establish strongholds in our minds.

And it is our duty to learn to recognize these thoughts and to take them captive. There is a battlefield within our minds that must be won.

We are called to live from Christ’s victorious mindset.

Over the last several months I have been practicing doing this and I have found it to be very helpful in our Christian walk.

I have spoken these Scriptural truths over myself and I would encourage you to do the same.

**I am God’s beloved child, I am a friend of God, I am a saint, I am blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, I am thinking with the mind of Christ more every day.**

These and many of biblical truths can help us renew our mind.

And the end result is that we can begin to know God’s will for us and for others in greater and greater measure. The key is learning to think with the mind of Christ that He has given us by His grace.

But we must choose to enter the bootcamp of His Word. We must choose to enlist in His spiritual army, so to speak.

**“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” – C.S. Lewis**

Friends, learning to live out of the mind of Christ by grounding ourselves in the truth of God’s Word is a life-long process. My friends, we must actively choose to do our part by submitting to God’s Word, by speaking God’s truth over ourselves, and by resisting any thinking that opposes us resting in God’s truth.

**In a sentence, what is the will of God? It is to develop the mind of Christ within us.** As we do this well, God’s kingdom will flourish within us and God’s Church will thrive in this world for him.

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/660-i-believe-in-christianity-as-i-believe-that-the-sun>

www.BibleGateway.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0A2XF3ri9k>