

Rediscovery in 2010

I've thought often about the statement that Jesus made to his disciples in Luke 18:8. **“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” Luke 18:8.** Is this a prophetic observation about what we see happening on the earth, that men and women, even believers, followers of Christ, are losing their faith? People seem to be abandoning their intimate walk with God, living lives of decreased devotion to God and the church. The bible predicts a falling away in the last days. Is this what the bible was talking about? Folks that have been Christians, followers of Christ for many years, and they've grown tired, discouraged, they've stopped going to church, stopped gathering for worship, stopped serving others through ministry. Will the Lord find faith on the earth?

As I prayed about this new year, 2010, I began to think about my own heart and life, my own faith. Are there some things from which I've walked away? Are there areas of my life that were once fertile soil for the Holy Spirit but now have grown barren, unplowed, unprepared, unproductive? I began to think along the lines of rediscovery. Those things I know or have known in the past, some things I think I have discovered, but perhaps I need to examine them again. I need to look at them again and see how they should be affecting my life. I see the need for the rediscovery of some things in my spiritual life and I think the same might be said for many of us.

It's like Isaac redigging the wells of his father Abraham. Water was and is essential to life and for certain in the climate in the Middle East it is absolutely necessary to sustain life, to grow crops, to water the livestock. In the Old Testament Abraham dug wells but later the Philistines filled them with earth. In Genesis 26 the bible tells us that God blessed Abraham's son, Isaac and that he planted crops and then reaped a hundredfold in the same year. As God blessed Isaac he began to open the wells that had been stopped up. Genesis 26 tells us, “Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them.”
Genesis 26:18

It's time to visit the old truths, to reopen the wells that the fathers dug, to discover again that walk with the Lord that perhaps we once knew – to discover again what it

means to abide in Christ, to grow in him and in bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Of course Isaac didn't just rediscover and dig out the old wells of his father. The bible tells us his servants discovered a well of fresh water and continued to dig new wells. I want 2010 to be a year of discovery. We will all dig some new wells, but I want to begin by challenging us to first make this a year of rediscovery. I wrote down about ten things that I felt we needed to rediscover – ten wells we need to reopen and draw from again in our spiritual life. We will probably only get through a couple of these this morning and we will look at the others in a couple of weeks when I return.

1. Rediscover the love of our Heavenly Father. Rediscover the father heart of God. He wants you to know him as your loving heavenly Father. I know the idea of a loving father raises red flags in some. Some of you have difficulty in relating to the concept of God as Father. Some have had a father that seemed aloof, reserved, that never showed emotion or expressed his love verbally or physically. He seemed to always hold everyone at arms length. For others a father has been someone you saw every other weekend or spent the summer with. For some a father is just a phantom, someone you heard about but never really knew. This present generation, in far too many cases, is a fatherless generation and over time, all of us will pay the terrible price for birthing a generation without fathers.

So when I talk about the love of the Heavenly Father, it is often difficult for some folks to relate. Let me add, this is not only a social crisis, a family crisis, it is indeed a spiritual crisis. Children need a father. Dad's be a father to your children. If you are not in the same residence as your children, I know it requires extra effort, but do whatever it takes to be a father to your children. And men, we need godly fathers and godly men to serve as role models in this church. We can use your help in Royal Rangers and in youth to show these boys and these young men what a godly man is like. We need you to live a faithful Christian life in front of these boys. I challenge you to step up and be a godly father.

But I'm talking about rediscovering the Father heart of God, the love that our heavenly Father has for us. You see, it all started with him. He initiated it all. The bible says, **"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that**

whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved.” John 3:16-17. God loved you so much that he made the ultimate sacrifice that you could be saved. Your heavenly father sent his Son to die in your place so that through his saving grace you could be brought into his family and become a beloved son or daughter of God, our heavenly Father. We have been redeemed and adopted into the family of God.

You have a heavenly father that loves you beyond what you are capable of imagining or thinking. You see, God isn't just capable of love, the bible says he is love. And that love has been supremely shown to you and to me through the gift of His Son, Jesus. What a lavish gift and grace has been bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God, our Heavenly Father. One writer spoke of our Heavenly Father as “the originating Lover, the Son who is the full self-expression of that Love and the Spirit who is the original and inexhaustible activity of that Love...” (Brennan Manning).

And look at this. We talked about this during the advent season, that Jesus came to reveal God to us and he revealed him as a loving, compassionate Father. When they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, he said, pray like this, “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” He taught them a new understanding of God as Father. How extraordinary. No one else thought of God as their Father. We didn't understand the possibility of this extraordinary relationship into which we could enter by faith.

At Jesus' baptism the voice of the Heavenly Father was heard saying, “this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.” God spoke as a father and Jesus the Son referred to God as Father. A new understanding of relationship was given to us. The apostle Paul declared in Romans 8 that through faith in Christ as our Savior we have been adopted into the family of God. Now we have this new relationship whereby we can refer to God as Father. Paul uses that familiar family word when he says, “**For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba,’ Father.” Romans 8:15** Father. Pappa. Daddy. It speaks to us of this amazing relationship we now have with God as

our Heavenly Father.

You may have never known the love of a biological father, but I challenge you to rediscover the love of your Heavenly Father. He longs to love you and care for you and you don't have to be afraid of his love for his love is only right and pure and holy. He is your Abba, your heavenly Father.

Brennan Manning, author of *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, in his book *the furious longing of God*, tells the story of a 78 year old nun that spoke to him at a retreat he conducted. (Read the story, page 45-47). She told of being abused by her father when she was a girl. She had never told anyone of this terrible secret. He prayed with her for healing and then asked her to do this for thirty days. Find a quiet place to sit and then say to the Lord, over and over, "Abba, I belong to you." She agreed to do it for thirty days and later sent him a letter that testified of the healing she had received and concluded with these words: "A year ago I would've signed this letter with my real name in religious life – Sister Mary Genevieve. But from now on, I'm Daddy's little girl."

You may have experienced abuse or rejection from your earthly father or some other father figure, you may have been betrayed or disappointed, but I can assure you today there is a Heavenly Father that loves you perfectly. He will not reject you. He will not abuse you. He loves you with a furious love and you can rejoice, feel secure again, feel loved again because you belong to Abba. Father. Reopen this well and draw deeply and rediscover the love of your Heavenly Father.

But does he really love you? Can we be certain of that love? Let me show you something that I've read so many times before but it just stopped me in my tracks when I read it again this week. Turn with me to John 17, the passage that we refer to as the High Priestly prayer of Jesus. He is praying to the Father for all of us who would believe in Him and follow him in faith. He prays that we will be one even as he and the Father are one. In verse 23 he prays, **"May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."** **John 17:23**

Did you hear what I just read? "...you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." That's Jesus talking. Praying. He says that the Father loves me as he loved Jesus. My heavenly Father loves me like he loves Jesus. I know that's

impossible, I know that can't be, Jesus is sinless and I'm a sinner. Jesus is full of faith and I'm often a doubter. Jesus never rebelled and I often rebel and question. Jesus was one with the Father from before the foundation of the world and some days I hardly even pray, but Jesus said he wanted the whole world to know that the Father had sent him and that the Father loved me and loved you even as he loved Jesus.

That will mess with you. That will mess you up! God loves you like he loves Jesus. I know it's crazy. It's foolish. But it's God's word. It's God's truth. He loves you. He loves you. He loves you. I have people ask me why I don't preach about demons and spiritual warfare and pulling down strongholds and taking authority over this and that. I've preached about some of those things over the years, but I'm concerned that too many Christians are trying to figure out the hierarchy of angels and demons and they haven't understood yet the depth of the love of the Father. I think you better get this. I think this is the really deep stuff right here. God loves you as he loved his beloved Son. And when you realize that, when you get that down in your heart and in your spirit, you don't have to figure out too much else because you will want to please God and serve him and love him and live for him with everything within you for the rest of your life here and for all of eternity. And when you get this in your heart and in your spirit you won't have any trouble trusting God with all the crazy situations and circumstances that come along on the journey. I don't have to be afraid because I know the incredible love of my heavenly Abba. Redig the old well or dig a new one and draw from this well full of the love of God.

John writes of the love of God and then says, **“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.” 1 John 4:16.** In 2010, know and rely upon the love God the Father has for you. Rediscover the love of your heavenly Father and come to realize that you can rely upon him and his love. He isn't going to stop loving you. Let the depth's of his love move you to love God and to love one another. You see when you learn how much God loves you, you want to love him in return and he says one of the ways we show our love for God is to love one another. **“And he has given us this command: whoever loves God must also love his brother.” 1 John 4:21.**

God loves you more than you can understand. Rediscover the love of your heavenly Father. Maybe you need to sit like Brennan Manning told that 78 year old

nun, and just repeat to your self, “Abba I belong to you”. Maybe you need to allow this Fatherly love of God to heal the broken and wounded and empty place in your heart that was caused by an absent or abusive Father. Come to your heavenly Father and find his redemptive, healing, saving love. He loves you even as he loves Jesus. Rediscover the love of your heavenly Father.

2. Rediscover what it means for you to trust in the sovereign purpose of God. I believe God has a plan and a purpose for each of us. He has created us, redeemed us, saved us and called us by his grace to live a life of purpose. The bible says the steps of the righteous are ordered of the Lord. He has ordained for us a journey, a race we are to run and to complete. The psalmist said that all of our days were written in his book even before we were ever born. I do not believe that all things have been predestined and our will has been circumvented, but I do believe that he is at work in and through our lives and the choices of our lives to see his sovereign purpose and will carried out. **The key for us is submission to his will and obedience to his word!**

If we can rediscover what it means to submit to the will of God and to obey his word, then I believe we will know what it means to not only trust the Lord, we will know what it means to rest in the Lord and in his sovereign purposes. If I will live my life in obedience to his word and I will remain submitted to his will for my life, then I don't have to live in fear, I don't have to be afraid. I can trust God's plans for my life. He will work it out.

Does that make sense? Look with me at Romans 8:28-29. **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” Romans 8:28-29.**

God is working for your good if you are one of those who loves him and who is submitted to the fulfillment of his purpose. When you are submitted to his will and obedient to his word, you don't have to be afraid because he is at work in your circumstances to cause it all to work together for your good and for his glory.

Understand, his ultimate glory, his goal, his purpose for all of us is what we read

in verse 29, that we might “be conformed to the likeness of his Son.” He already loves us like he loves Jesus and he wants us to be like Jesus, to reflect his nature and his love and his glory. I believe this is his highest will and purpose for all of us, to be conformed to the likeness of his Son. I believe that everything else falls under the umbrella of this sovereign purpose – our being like Jesus.

What’s it all about? It’s about us being more and more like Jesus, being changed into his image from glory to glory. It is about us remaining submitted to his will and obedient to his word in every situation, in every crisis, in every challenge and opportunity that life presents to us. What will we do? What is his will? His will is that we remain submitted and obedient so we can be conformed to the image and likeness and character of his only begotten son, Jesus.

God is at work in your life to bring you to a place of wholeness and completeness in him. Paul called that being conformed to the likeness of His Son. Cooperate with what God is doing. Co-operate with the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Rest in the sovereign will and purpose of God. If you don’t quite understand what all is going on in your life, keep submitting your life to his will and keep obeying his word and watch how God works it all out. You can trust his sovereign purpose. You can rest in his will and his promise. He has something glorious in store for us because he will cause all of it to bring us into conformity to the likeness of his Son. That’s what it’s all about. That’s how the glory is revealed in us, as we look more and more like Jesus with his character and nature revealed in and through us.

It’s time to rediscover the love of the Heavenly Father and to rediscover the importance of trusting in the sovereign purposes of God. Redig the wells and draw from the life giving water of his love and receive the peace that comes as you trust in him and rest everything in him.