

Rediscovery in 2010 Part 2

It's good to be home again. Last Sunday was quite different. We left Syktyvkar early Sunday morning and flew back to Moscow in order to leave for home the next day. We managed to miss flights both going to and returning from Russia this trip. We left Tulsa on Sunday and I didn't get my luggage until Thursday night in the city of Perm after we had already ministered in two cities. It was around 30 below zero in Perm and 90% of the people in attendance at our service took public transportation to get there, meaning they stood outside and waited on a bus to come to the service in that weather. Thank you for allowing us to go and to minister again to the people of Russia. We saw hundreds of people come forward to be saved and to receive prayer.

The first Sunday of January I shared a message with you about rediscovery for the new year. I told you then I felt the Lord had spoken to my heart about some things we needed to rediscover. You know how that is when you find something you had long ago kept, you put it away and then you rediscover it. You look at it differently, it brings a new and different type of joy or pleasure to you. That's what I'm talking about. These are perhaps some things we already know, but we need to see them and perhaps experience them in a new way today. I talked to you that morning about rediscovering the love of our Heavenly Father, to really know and experience the Father heart of God. It is transformational when we discover that our Heavenly Father loves us like he loves Jesus. Remember I told you that Jesus prayed in John 17, "**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**. To know that he loves us, even though we are weak and we fail and stumble and fall, to know that he loves us and accepts us through his son is to know assurance, it is to know salvation and life. It is to know that everything is going to be all right because he loves me even as he loves Jesus. We are his children through faith in Christ.

Let me share a couple of other things with you this morning. **1. Rediscover the love of our Heavenly Father. 2. Rediscover what it means to trust in the sovereignty of God.** We probably can't make much progress on the second if we haven't rediscovered the first. We can't trust God's sovereignty – that he rules with complete and ultimate authority over all creation and that he has a plan and purpose for

our life until and unless we know how much he loves us. Once we've established that, we have no cause for fear when we face all the ups and downs of life because God is with us all along the journey.

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. **There is a destiny and a design that God has for each of us.** Remember, the bible says "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:10 God has designed us for good works and an abundant life in Christ and has destined us for his purposes and for his eternal presence and glory. **He is moving us toward that destiny, according to that design, and is doing so by his mercy, grace and power.**

The bible says, "**For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb...All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.**" Psalm 139:1. God has a plan and purpose for each one of us. 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. I don't believe that all things have been predestined to the extent that our will is circumvented. We have a free will and can make free choices, even to our own detriment and eternal destruction. But I do believe that God is at work in and through our lives and through the choices of our life to bring to completion his purpose and his plan. **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. Everytime something out of the ordinary happens, or something unpleasant or unexpected happens, we don't have to fall apart in fear or respond in total frustration. We don't have to live our lives in fear, overwhelmed with worry and dread concerning the present or the future. Instead, we can approach every situation with the knowledge that we can trust God and we can trust his plans for our lives. He will work it out.

There is a key for us here in Romans 8. The bible says, "**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.

Notice the verse refers to the two things we are talking about: love and purpose. Love and his sovereign purpose. I said before we were created with a destiny and a unique design. That unique design is made up of your physical/biological dna, your environment, your personality, the way you were raised, your history, your experiences, your past choices. And God has a purpose, a destiny for you that will uniquely be fulfilled using all of the resources of your very unique design.

And here is where he is taking us – we have been designed (“predestined”) to be conformed to the likeness of his Son. That is our destiny. **Here is his will, his destiny, and his destination for us – that all of us will be made conformable to the likeness, the image, the nature of his son.**

He has predestined and designed us so that by his grace we can become like Jesus. It suggests a process at work. “To be made conformable to the image...” It suggests ongoing breaking, shaping, molding, adjusting, adding and subtracting. It is an ongoing process as God takes the resources of our unique design and through the creative handiwork of the Holy Spirit and according to the riches of his grace he uses those resources to conform and shape us to the image of his glorious Son, Jesus.

What I’m telling you is that when you submit all that you have and all that you are to Jesus in surrender, God takes all of that, even the hurts and the pain of the past, and he takes it all and in ways far beyond what any of us can comprehend or understand he builds something that is for his glory and for our good. He redeems it all and sanctifies it in some glorious way that causes all of it to work together in a way that culminates in us looking and sounding and acting more and more like Jesus.

Understand, his ultimate goal and 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 and it is our highest calling and greatest desire, to be like Him. I believe that everything else then falls under the umbrella of this sovereign purpose, his greatest will for our lives, 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 as the apostle Paul talks about. 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 he can continue to work in and through our lives so we can become 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 in his promises. 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 then 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 rest that comes as we trust the sovereign purposes of God. Let me tell you again, absolutely, with certainty, you can trust God. You can trust his ways, his purposes, his will. You can trust him with your future, with your children, with your marriage, with your career, with your health, with your life and with your death. Trust Him and rest in his sovereign purposes for your life.

Let me add one more thing. You can trust God with his sovereign purposes in regard to the end times and the nations of the world. I don't know how it's all going to turn out but we know it is going to continue to get worse. Wars and rumors of wars, disasters like we've seen in Haiti will not be the exception. This world is coming undone. Christians will come under fire as never before. It is not going to get easier to live for Jesus. And Jesus told us these things would happen. "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and

pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.” Luke 21:10-11. But he said, “do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away...make up your mind not to worry beforehand.”

If you think I’m telling you to just accept whatever comes along as God’s will and to not resist evil or to not stand in faith, then you aren’t hearing what I’m trying to tell you. I’m telling you you do not have to be afraid, regardless of what comes to pass upon this old world, or what happens in your life, because God is in control and is still at work in your life, if you’ll allow him, to fulfill his purposes, to bring to completion the destined and ordained journey of your life. You don’t have to succumb to worry and fear. Do not be afraid but trust in the direction of your Sovereign Lord.

3. Rediscover the power of God at work in your weakness. One of the reasons we have a hard time trusting God’s sovereign purpose is our belief that we keep messing up his plans beyond his ability to repair. How can God fulfill his purposes in my life when I keep making mistakes, when I’m so weak, when I lack talent or ability? Surely I’ve messed up my life beyond the reach of his redemption or his grace.

Most of us, or at least many of us have little confidence when it comes to our place with God. If I asked how many feel like they are spiritually excelling and truly living a life close to the presence of God, I doubt there would be many hands lifted. Most of us feel so inadequate, ill-equipped to serve God or to make a difference. Here we are stumbling through, often uncertain, spiritually challenged, reading and believing and longing to be all he says we are, and yet too often falling short again, overcomers that find ourselves being overcome.

What do we do? Where do we turn? Here is what Hebrews says. **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.” Hebrews 4:15.** Jesus is our high priest, our advocate before the Father, the one who understands our struggles, our weakness, our feebleness. He understands because he felt it, he experienced it, yet without sin. He sympathizes with our weakness.

If you are feeling abandoned because of your lack, your weakness, your failures, may I tell you that even in your weakness and your struggles God hasn’t abandoned

you or given up on you. Instead, the bible tells us that in our weakness, his strength is revealed.

The Lord told Paul after his asking for the thorn in his flesh to be removed, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”** Paul was a strong person, a strong personality, perfect in the law, a Pharisee, a Hebrew, not used to approaching life from weakness. But he learned that his strength was not enough, that even the great apostle Paul had weakness and infirmity, had areas of inadequacy in his life and that total dependence upon Christ and his strength was the only way to live. He then said, **“Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecution, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”** 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

God exploits our weakness. If you don’t think so, take a look at the people around you this morning. All of us. In our weaknesses and with our history and with our shortcomings and yet he chooses to take us and reveal his glory and his power and his love and his mercy and his grace through a bunch of damaged but redeemed folks like us.

When we are weak, when we admit that we cannot do it or make it on our own, God’s power and strength is revealed. When our feebleness is evident to all and yet we succeed, then everyone knows that it was God that did it and not us and our flesh. When we are weak, we are strong in Christ.

You aren’t perfect? You don’t have all the answers? You made some mistakes along the way? Your inadequacies outweigh your advantages? Welcome to the human race. Don’t give up, don’t quit, remember what you learned in the nursery: “Jesus loves me this I know, for the bible tells me so, little ones to him belong, we are weak but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me.”

I stand up here Sunday after Sunday, whether it looks like it or not, I stand before you in weakness. I don’t feel capable or able to pastor this great church. In fact, it’s not just a feeling, it’s the truth. I know I’m not capable or able. I don’t know how to be a leader, to pastor, to preach to a changing culture and to multiple generations, but when I am weak, when I admit my feebleness and allow God to show up, He is strong.

I can rest in him, in his purposes and his grace. I can lean upon him and rely upon his character and his faithfulness. I can turn to him and partake of his divine nature and find supernatural power and anointing to break the yoke and to pull down strongholds and to accomplish all he has for us to do.

So it is not from a position of power but from the posture of a servant, willing to admit weakness and fears, but willing to stay submitted and surrendered to Christ that we fight the good fight of faith, that we run the race and we stand in the winners circle, victorious, overcomers and conquerors in the kingdom of God, the kingdom where the bible says, the lame take the prey.

Paul may have been thinking about us as well as the church at Corinth when he wrote, **“Brothers think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were influential, not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.’” 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.**

Maybe what I’m telling you is simply this: God loves you more than you know. He has a plan and a destiny laid out for you that is grander than what you think. Even in our weakness, in spite of our weakness and our failures and mistakes, God is at work and will reveal his strength and power. He wastes nothing. He redeems and makes new and he will do it again in our lives if we will allow him. Trust me. He is still using folks like us, the foolish and the weak in order that we may boast in the Lord, that all glory will belong to him and to his Son, now and forever.

That worry, that fear, that big decision, that impossible situation that you are facing – God knows all about it. He is at work in that. Maybe behind the scenes, maybe in ways you cannot see or you may never see, but he is at work. That place, that area where you feel so inadequate, submit it all to the Lord and watch his strength be manifested. He is at work, even in folks like me and folks just like you. He has a

marvelous plan for your life and a glorious and eternal destiny for you if you will trust him and obey him and submit your life to him today. Give it all to him today and then learn to rest in his love and care.

Song: I surrender all.

Benediction: To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy, to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore. Amen.