

Freshwater Sermon 6-14-20

PASTOR SCOTT: Hey, Freshwater. I hope you're doing well, just in your walk with Christ, in connecting with Him. What I want to do is, before we jump into this, I just want to pray. Not only just for this time, but, again, just pray for our nation, pray for us as we walk through this. For us individually and as a church family here. Just join me as we start these few moments here with Christ in prayer.

Lord, I just pray for us, our church, that you would continue to have your hand on us, strengthening us, guiding us. I pray for our nation. Lord, I pray that you would hear not only our prayers and our voice calling out to you, but those of your church, your family here in America, calling out for our country.

We join the prayers that say, bring revival. We join the prayers that say, bring your justice. Your kind of justice, not man's definition of justice, but your justice in our country. Lord, would you put into us resolve to see your kingdom come, your will be done, as

we look and see what's going on in our nation. Lord, would you lead us towards fighting against racism and the ways that you would have this -- have us do, in fighting for justice, as you lead us forward.

Lord, would you also shepherd us, keep us as a church family. Lord, we have been -- we've been meeting in one sense, Jesus, gathering online, calling each other, making sure we're okay, but, Lord, we haven't been able to get together. I pray this next week, Lord, and the weeks to come, you'd continue to shepherd us, guide us, lead us as a church, and speak to us, into these moments here, Lord, through your Word. Amen.

I have a question for you. When do you think, in your own mind, when is someone responsible for their own soul? For owning the care of their soul, as it were. Is it when somebody starts driving, so at 16? Is that when the age is that someone starts to care for their soul, that they're responsible for it? Back in Kansas, it was actually 14 years old. You could drive at 14 on the roads. It was great.

Culture says maybe it's 18 years old, when you're old enough to be tried as an adult. Culture kind of says that that's the line. Maybe it's 21, when you drink alcohol. You're responsible for what happens if you do. I don't know. You look at Judaic culture, and when a boy turned 13, when a girl turned 12, that was the age of responsibility.

Part of the tradition out of that -- it's serious, and then there's a funny thing in the middle of that -- the father, when it's at the Bar mitzvah for a boy, the father gives thanks to God, that he is no longer responsible for the sins of his child. Which I think is funny. It's serious, but it's also funny. Like, oh, thank you, Lord. They're making their own decisions.

So I don't know. For those of you who are 12 or 13 right now, do you ever think about the fact that, really, the care of your soul may be, in fact, on you now, and not on your parents, your spiritual decisions?

If you read through the Bible, there's stories out of the Bible of these boys who, these girls who would follow Christ. We

got a great story here in 1 Samuel, where Samuel, the prophet, is a boy. At a young age, it says, he's a boy, and he hears from God. God starts actually to speak through him, a vision, explaining what's going to be happening. It says this, that "Samuel grew" -- in verse 19 of chapter 3 -- "and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground."

Somewhere in there, Samuel is already, at a young age, owning his faith and his relationship with God.

Jump over. There is another famous story in 2 Chronicles. There's this boy, king Josiah. It says, "He was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 31 years in Jerusalem. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in the ways of David, his father."

David wasn't his father, father, but he was from the line of David, centuries later. "And he didn't turn aside to the right or to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign" -- so he is 16 years old -- "while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of

David his father. In the 12th year, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places."

The Bible talks about how he took over the sovereign reign, the throne of the kingdom of Judah. When he was 16, that's when he started to go for it. That's when he started to take ownership of his faith. And then four years later, the courage and the resolve to actually purify the country of idols. Six years later, he's 26, he has this compulsion, led by God, after all the idols are cleared, he looks around and goes, "Wait a minute, the temple is in shambles here."

They rebuild the temple, start fixing it back up. It's a big renovation project. Then they find the Book of the Law. Nobody was looking at the Book of the Law. It was in the temple somewhere under debris, in a storage room, I don't know where it was. This priest found it.

It says in chapter 34:19, this priest came and read out of the Book of the Law, "When the king heard the words of the law, he tore his clothes." He started to weep.

Probably heard from Deuteronomy and Exodus, about this covenant that God had made with Israel, to bless those who obey him, but also to bring judgment on those who disobey him. He knew he had just cleaned out the southern kingdom of all these idols. He knew Israel was in a perilous place. You can read about that story. Encourage you to do that. Chapter 34. I won't tell you the end. It is a great story.

But what's interesting about Josiah is he didn't have the Word of God. He was 16, and he started to own it, but he didn't have the Word of God. If you look at his heritage, his family, his dad was one of the worst kings ever. His dad hated God, led the southern kingdom away from God.

I think it's interesting that Josiah owns his faith. Samuel owns his faith, and he is in a temple where all the priests are corrupt. Yet, Samuel pursues God. You know, a few weeks ago, I talked about, what does it look like -- or this call to come back stronger. Since we cannot gather, come back stronger, come back healthier.

As a staff, we've been talking about this and just trying to think through, what does that look like for someone to come back stronger? What are the elements that should be part of this? As a staff, we've put together these next four weeks of messages. This isn't just me. These are conversations the staff has had, some of the elders. We've talked about this, of what does owning our faith mean while we can't gather. Actually, now that we're going to gather, but some of us may not feel comfortable coming yet.

Let me just be clear. Everyone, boy, girl, at that age of accountability, whether that's 12, 13, 16, somewhere in that age group, 18, anyone for sure over 18, definitely, I'd say it stretches earlier than that, can own your faith. If boys can own their faith, boys and girls can do this at a younger age maybe than we give credit for.

The question I have for you and for me is, are we owning our walk with God? Are we owning our faith? I mean, sometimes, I think we get lulled into lies and deception and laziness and apathy or complacency. Sometimes

we think, I don't know, maybe this is you, if I gather on Sunday morning, and Pastor Scott gives the message, and Jake does the worship, and does the right songs in the right order, and Pastor Scott gives a halfway decent message, not a lame one, whatever, doesn't lay an egg, I'm good for the week. It's on me or it's on Jake.

Maybe you go to the youth ministry, and if Len is up for it, he gives one of the best messages, it is really Len, and you're good for the week. Maybe -- I don't know where you do this, but we farm it out to somebody else. It's up to them, if they don't do it well, it's really, well, it's their fault and not -- it's not on you.

Let me just say this and make this clear: No one else is responsible for the care of your soul except for you. If you're at that age of accountability, is your soul getting stronger? Are you owning this? The care of your soul, or are you passive in it? Over these next four weeks, we're going to talk about these, first two weeks, just our own soul, owning it for our soul. Two messages on

that. The following two weeks will be owning our relationships and owning our home.

As we think about even just today, tackling this issue, what does it mean to own it, it starts, first and foremost, our care, the care of our soul, the health of our soul starts with the Word of God. If you want to see your soul grow stronger, your soul get healthier, grow deeper, it starts with the Word of God. It's not fancy. It's nothing new. I think, often, there's always the next thing, what's the next thing? What's the next thing? There is no next thing. There is the Word of God. It's the same, yesterday, today, in the future.

Jesus says -- he spoke to Timothy and said this, that "All scripture is God-breathed. It is useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Our souls would be equipped. Jesus said through the writer of Hebrews in chapter 4, "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. Piercing

right to the soul and the spirit. The joints, the marrow, discerning the hearts and the intentions -- or discerning the thoughts and the intentions of the heart."

Romans 1 says, "This word is the power of God for salvation."

Psalms 119 says, "This word is a lamp in the darkest place. The lamp to our feet, the light unto our path."

Jesus talks about how this Word is life, this Word abides in us, this Word gives us hope. This Word, God says over and over again in so many different ways, it is the surest way to find him, connect with him, and to see our souls get life and health.

Psalms 1, you know, what does that look like, how does that work? Psalms 1 says to meditate on the word day and night. Now, meditate is a farming word. We look at that, and you may think, like, the, Om, you know, Om. It is actually a farming word. It's a farming word for chew your cud, which is kind of gross.

So what cows do. I don't know if you've ever owned a steer. I imagine most of us have not owned a steer, a cow. What cows do

is they take a big bite of food, right, grain, alfalfa, whatever they're eating, chew it a long time, swallow it, and think, that is really good. They, what, burp it up, barf it up, I don't know. It comes back up, and they chew it again. They do that process with their food to get all the nutrients, to get all the vitamins, to get all the whatever out of it they can.

The psalmist says, I want you to ruminate on the Word of God. Ew. But it makes sense, right? Chew it, swallow it, bring it back up, chew it, chew it, get everything you can out of it, swallow it again. Maybe bring it back up again. You're like, oh. But it's the word right out of Psalms 1.

Ruminate on it. Don't take a quick bite, inhale it, you're done. Ruminates. Come to the Word of God. Ruminates on it. What God begins to do, as we come to him, there are moments where it's out of those moments where we bring it back up, we come back to it, that God starts to send it deeper and deeper into our souls.

There's moments where you could

read along, and it is like a lightning bolt, zap, that is the passage you needed in that moment, on that day. Like, how does that happen? So many of us have stories of how God has done that for us and fed our souls.

We come to the Word of God, and what happens is, we start to get fed. We start to go deeper. Our souls get cared for. What does that look like? I just want to be, you know, just kind of very practical. Some people, you can download an app, a Bible read-through app, and read through the Bible in a year. That's a great way.

You can maybe buy a devotional. That maybe takes a verse or a passage and explains it on a page, and that can be really rich and meaningful. That's a way. You can join one of our Bible studies that we have here. We take a book, and there is a workbook, you do homework on it, you come back and compare. You listen to a teacher. That's another way that gets you deep into that.

There's all kinds of ways to do this. Memorizing the Word of God, that's something that the Bible talks about. Hiding

the Word in our heart. Memorizing favorite verses. Memorizing verses that we need. Maybe right now, you need a verse that helps you in fear, or when fear comes, and anxiety comes. There's so many verses about fear. Just memorizing those and just saying, "No, no, wait a minute, this is the promise of God. This is the truth of God. I will not fear. I cast all my cares on Him. He is going to care for me."

There's so many ways to approach the Bible. There isn't a right way and a wrong way to do it. And as you begin, I want to encourage you on that. Don't feel like you're locked in because we're all kind of wired differently. Explore. Try different things. Don't get stuck in one way of doing it for years. Try something new. But the Word of God, if we're going to own our faith, it starts here.

It starts with us and the Word. We have this incredible privilege. Like, we actually can own a copy of the Word. We can own a copy of it. We can walk around with this thing. We can have one in our room. It is unprecedented when you -- oh, I can't believe I

said that word. It is incredible when you think about world history.

Like, there was, like, a copy of the Word, like, when you think back to even Josiah. Like, it's in this room, disrepair, they can't find it, because most Israel, nobody had copies of it. There was a copy in the temple. That was it. And you and I get one of these things. I don't want to throw guilt on you. I want to say, it is an incredible privilege. Take advantage of it.

Let me ask you something, are you owning for the care of your soul by getting into this Word? Not just once on a Sunday when I'm preaching this message, but you're in this Word. It starts here. It starts here.

I remember even when I was young, and I would always talk to these people who walked with Christ for, you know, forever, I thought, like they were just ancient. Now, I'm realizing I'm at the age where I thought they were ancient. But I'd always go, "How do you know so much about the Word?"

It wasn't just me, a pastor. It was just these people that I know love Jesus,

that were in their 40s, 50s, 60s. How do you know? You seem so old. I'm there, and I realize, it just comes daily. It is nothing fancy. It is just daily, getting into this Word and owning it for yourself. Nobody else can make you do it.

You can even fake it and get into it, and pretend like you're reading it, but the question is, will you own it? So the Word is the surest way, the simplest way, the clearest way to begin to own our own soul and the care of it in our spiritual walk.

The second thing I want to speak into, just a practical step of what it means to own our faith and the care of our soul, is solitude and silence. What's interesting, if you read through the Bible, there's all kinds of stories about God and his people getting away into silence, solitude, getting away from it all.

In Luke, it is interesting, there are multiple stories here where Jesus -- or references when Jesus gets away from it all. Chapter 4 of Luke, it says this, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan

and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for 40 days."

40 days, it was Jesus and the Spirit. Communing with the Father, 40 days. Another story in chapter 4 at the end, verse 46, it says this, "And when it was day, he departed and went to a desolate place."

Over in chapter 5:16-17 -- or 15-16 it says, "Even more, the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray."

Over to chapter 6, "In these days, he went out to the mountain to pray. All night he continued in prayer to God."

You see this rhythm where Jesus got away from it all, got away from people, got away from culture, got away from the press of crowds. Got away from all the expectations. Got away from the noise. He got into solitude with him and the Father and the Spirit. This is the Son of God. It is not just here in Luke. It is in Matthew. It is in Mark. It is in John. Solitude does something for our souls. That silence does something for our

souls.

It stops distractions from the outside. It stops the voices from the outside. It stops the agendas and the priorities of other people. The pressures of society and culture. It's not just solitude for solitude's sake. It is moving away to move towards, right? It is moving away from that to move towards God and commune with him, connection with him. But it creates -- which is interesting -- it creates a whole different problem.

I love what Richard Foster says. Richard Foster is famous about writing and encouraging Christians to own the care of their soul. He wrote a book called "The Spiritual Disciplines." These things can help you own it. He talks about solitude and silence a lot. And I love what he said. This is so disrupting. He says this, it is a fascinating statement. He says this, "We can only survive solitude if we cling to Christ," when we're in solitude.

We can only survive solitude when we cling to Christ when we're there. You may

think, what does that mean, survive solitude? What happens when we go into solitude, and we get away from it all, all we're left with is us and Christ. And I don't know if you've ever done this, gotten away, but what starts to happen, and he describes his experience, and it is the experience of so many people who have done this, often what can happen is solitude is finally all the distractions are done, and all that's left is me. All that's left is really you.

I can get into these moments where, all of a sudden, I'm daydreaming about, like, revenge. I'm daydreaming about, like, maybe I've just read this story about what they're doing to Christians, and I want revenge. I can literally start daydreaming about revenge and killing people, in the name of Christ, right?

I get done, my blood pressure is up, and I go, what is that? Or I start daydreaming, oh, if I had this money, I could do that. Or I'll go buy that. Or I start thinking about, what if I was famous? What if they knew me? What if they were, like, friends, right? What if I was this? It's all

the things that start to come up. What are all these things?

That's what Richard Foster says, "If we survive solitude, it is only because we're clinging to Christ."

What happens in solitude is Christ says, "Okay, let's start to deal with some of these things."

It doesn't happen every time, but, often, that's what happens. He's like, the problem isn't out there. The problem is in here. He says, "I want you to die to that and confess this. I want you to surrender this."

He starts to take us deeper and deeper into surrender. Deeper and deeper into yielding. Deeper into submissiveness. What happens is, our soul starts to get healthy. As we confess and surrender, solitude takes us deeper into that. Silence takes us deeper into that.

You know, it's often what happens is, we have moments of silence, even in our services sometimes, and I have people -- I've heard comments over the years, people are like, that freaks me out, or that freaks people out.

Why is that? Afraid of silence and solitude. There's something there, about that solitude and not being distracted and not having noise, that all of a sudden, it's us and it's God.

There was another part of solitude and silence that isn't about the deeper surrender, but it's about the receiving. The idea that we come and God gives us things. Luke 4, what's interesting is, Jesus goes out for 40 days, right, fasting, solitude. He's tempted, all that, withstands temptation, but he comes back and it said this, "He returns in the power of the Spirit to Galilee."

Chapter 4 again, toward the end, he knew, he had clarity on his mission, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God. That's my purpose. That's my mission. I'm staying on point."

People were starting to distract, "Oh, Jesus, you can do this. Jesus, you can do that."

Jesus came back focused. This is my mission. This is my purpose. Out of solitude and prayer and silence. Jesus, at other times withdrew, in chapter 5, to desolate

places, comes back and heals someone.

Chapter 6, he goes to the mountain to pray. When he comes back, what does he do? He calls the 12. Finally, the full team is together. He comes back, and him and the Spirit of God, and God the Father, they look at this, and he has -- they know the team, "These are the people I'm going to invest in and call."

He comes back, gathers his disciples. He received direction, received purpose, he received power. That's what happens in solitude and silence, is God says, "Let me give this to you. I'm going to give this to you. I'm going to give this to you."

One of the most, I think -- in our generation, one of the most famous men I know that had this discipline of solitude, silence was Bill Bright. Started Campus Crusade for Christ, called CRU now. He started that on his own, him and his wife. They had this call to go reach college students.

That man, I think it was multiple times, at least, I think, it was three times, it may have been more, he did 40-day fasts and

prayer. Got away. Solitude and prayer, for 40 days he did that, multiple times.

When he died, there was 26,000 people on staff, over 250,000 who were volunteers and part of Campus Crusade, and 191 nations. And who knows? It is countless, how many people, how many students started to follow Christ because of that man and what he received in those times of fasting from the Lord, power, anointing, purpose, direction.

I wonder, sometimes, if we don't own it because we're not coming to Him to receive what we need to own and what he'll give us to do it. When he calls us to do something, he's going to empower us and give us direction for it, but we won't take the time to get away and stop. Stop the noise. Make sure that our hearts are pure and clean and there's nothing grabbing us and holding us back, and also to receive.

Solitude is such a powerful thing. And I wonder, even now, what it looks like going forward. We're in this moment in our -- this is just a -- this is one of the most trying times I've seen in our nation. I think

many of us are seeing this. We have this -- we have this pandemic. It's really this -- it is a physical pandemic, right? Covid-19. What it has done to us as a country, what it's done to many of us individually, this has wrecked a lot of us. It's been difficult for us. A lot of fear. A lot of concern.

We have a social pandemic in our nation right now. That is bringing its own set of fear and worry and anxiety. We're seeing -- we're just seeing the nation on fire. And we have -- I would say this is -- I was just listening to a pastor here, Tony Evans, and he said -- these are his. These aren't mine. I wish I could say it is mine -- but he said, we have a spiritual pandemic, in that our nation is rejecting God. Which is bringing a whole different set of death, right? More death.

I just want to close with this illustration. We are raising 24 meat birds. We raise them up, take them to the butcher, and we'll put them in the freezer. In the past year, we haven't had hawks live on our property. We have woods, and we've never had hawks there. Last year, they decided to come

in. We thought, oh, that's so cute. That's so fun. We have hawks. Like, they're loud.

So this hawk is -- and I think we've had probably hawklings. I don't know what you call them. But this one hawk comes over to our little chicken trailer, only 8 foot by 8 foot. It has a roof on it, dome thing, whatever, then it has fencing on the other half of it.

So our chickens are in this 8 by 8 pen, totally protected. This hawk comes and lands on it. He's stressing out my chickens. Like, our chickens are freaking out because this hawk is looking over them, trying to figure out where his meal is going to come. How is he going to get it? Our chickens run all over the place, and he freaks them out. We're going to try to figure out what to do with Mr. Hawk. Something non-violent.

But I wonder if that is really a description of us. Even right now, with all of this going on. We're stressed out. We're running around. We're maybe freaking out. Maybe whatever, I don't know. Christ is saying, "Would you come away? Come away and be

with me. Come away. Turn off the news. Turn off the phones. Leave it all behind. Be with me. Hear from me. Let me take things from you, and let me give you things."

We have this vision of seeing our church coming back, every single one of us, healthier, stronger than when this all started. And not just healthier and stronger, but all of us.

I think there's this, you know, concern I have. Jesus calls us, we're sheep. We're sheep. That's what he says, "People, you're my sheep, and I'm your shepherd."

Sometimes, we think the shepherd isn't around, and we start to wander. The shepherd is still here, but we'll wonder. Our vision is not only to come back healthier and stronger, but to come back all together. Don't wander.

I would encourage you to listen to the Lord. Just you and him, say, "How am I doing with the Word? How am I doing in silence and solitude, to hear from you? To not only have you remove things, but have you give me things?"

What is he calling you to own?

Hopefully, in these few moments, he's speaking to you. And you'll respond and take ownership of your faith. God bless you.