

Pastor David's notes for 7/10-11/2010

Reaching For God Together

Gathering Searching Hearts

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone -an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

Acts 17:24-31

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

Matthew 12:30

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"Gathering Searching Hearts"

We reach for and find God with a searching heart that is moved by:

1. personal need/desire
2. the recurring question of more
3. a deeper inclination to know/love

What do irreligious people need to begin to reach for God and find Him?

1. opportunity/encounter
2. invitation/welcome
3. personal initiative built on surprise

next weekend: "Reaching for God Together" - Growing



CONNECTION QUESTIONS

for personal study & individual reflection,
and small group discussion & comment

“Gathering Searching Hearts”: Acts 17:16-31; Matthew 12:30;
Luke 3:15-18; Jeremiah 29:11-14; Prov 25:2; 1 Chronicles 28:9

1. As a result of our sin and brokenness, we hide from God even as He searches for us (Genesis 3:6-10). The starting line for spiritual change is our personal decision to reach out from the shadows and begin pursuing a restored connection with God only made possible by His grace. This reaching for God is the foundation of our very existence, the true meaning of life in this fallen world (Acts 17:26-27). In your own experience, what has moved you out of the passive shadows and into an active place of reaching for God? Has this been an easy or comfortable process? What makes it difficult?

2. How has your motivation for pursuing and finding God in your life changed or grown over the course of time? What has increased your motivation? What has made it wane?

3. If it is God’s intent to gather searching hearts like yours and mine back into restored and right relationship with Himself, once we experience His gracious and forgiving embrace in Jesus Christ, how does He begin to involve us with that saving intent for others (Mt 12:30)? What do you think Jesus meant by “gather with me”? What would be involved in doing this?

4. Most people in the world today and all throughout history have been like those Paul addressed in Athens as “very religious” (Acts 17:16-23). As Paul observed, this common religious motivation can lead us as much into idolatry as it can into the real relationship with God. But many today are irreligious, they are indifferent or antagonistic to religious concerns. What can help people who are put off by religion find the truth their heart is searching for? How can the church serve ‘the reach for God’ that both religious and irreligious people need to make?

5. John the Baptist prophesied the saving and separating role that Jesus as the Christ would have in the world by saying that He would “gather the wheat into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Lk 3:17). In all of our lives Jesus seeks to gather us to what is good and lasting, and separate us from what is false and failing. How do people resist this gathering mandate of Jesus? What can we do in our lives to cooperate with the pull of His grace into lasting goodness and fruitfulness?

6. Proverbs 25:2 says that it is “the glory of kings” to search out a matter. How does searching and reaching for what needs to be known, must be known, reveal the worth and nobility of the one who searches for it? How do we show our true value by the things we pursue and search to find?

