

God's Vision of Hope: Part 3: Changing Our World

1. Last week we talked about how God wants to change the way we think so He can transform the way we act.
 - a. When you and I became Christians, God changed our hearts. He put a new heart inside of us.
 - i. Scripture: Ezekiel 36:26 *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."*
 - ii. Explain as needed.
 - b. But the way we think has to change as well. We want to do right but until we die to the old way of living – to the "self" life and the "self" led way of thinking, we won't change the way we act. We will want to be different but find ourselves still repeating conduct we despise (Romans 6).
 - i. So in Romans 12:2 we are instructed to change the way we think, allow our minds to be renewed, so that our lives will be transformed.
 - ii. That renewal is best found in bible reading and study. The Bible which is called the "word of God" is "alive". Hebrews 4:12 *"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."*
 1. This is how God changes our minds to match the new heart He has given us.
2. **But for what purpose does God want to transform us?**
 - a. **So we can be agents of change in our world!**
 - b. Jesus came to change this world...**Jesus didn't come to save the planet but the people on it.**
 - i. He came to change the destiny of the world's inhabitants.
 - ii. This world was on a collision course with hell. There was no hope for any to be saved.
 1. But Jesus was born, God came and took on flesh and intercepted our date with destruction.
 2. We were all destined for death, we had no hope. We were in opposition to God, running our own lives and living the way we wanted to. But in the fullness of time, God came and was born of a woman, to live and grow up and bear the sins of the world...so that we could be made right with God. Jesus went to a terrible, cruel cross to pay a price we couldn't pay, and it was a debt He didn't owe. Yet He paid it in full.
 - a. **Imagine owing an enormous amount on a home. Foreclosure is coming and you know the day is coming when you will lose your home. But then, a person whom you have scorned most of your life comes along and sells all He has, (and it costs Him his life) to pay off your mortgage.**
 - b. That is what Jesus did...he bought our debt of sin that we weren't able to pay.
 - iii. Jesus came to transform this world into the Kingdom of God, where God rules and reigns in people's hearts.
 1. Who reigns in many parts of the earth? The devil. .
 2. **(I heard that atheists blame the God they don't believe in for the world's evil.)**
 3. But Jesus came to set up the Kingdom of God, where the devil's works would be destroyed and the devil's reign over people's lives would be broken!
 - c. Luke 4:18-21 *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom (deliverance) for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

- i. Context: Jesus is just beginning His ministry and is in Galilee, when in the Synagogue, he is handed a scroll or book from the bible to read aloud. He turns to this passage in Isaiah and reads it, and then after a long pause, when he has the attention of the entire congregation, says, *“today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*
- ii. What did He mean and why did He say this? (anointed...the Spirit of God is upon Him to do God’s will)
- iii. In this prophecy, **Jesus announces that He is here to do five significant things.**
 1. **To preach the gospel to the poor.**
 - a. The word "preach" here in the original Greek carries the connotation "*to bring the good news with a message intended to cheer up the hearer.*" It reminds me of the hope we are to bring to people who have no hope, who face bills, and see no way out of their poverty and despair.
 - b. We need to understand that poverty’s roots are found in a broken relationship with God.
 - i. When our relationship with God is broken, our ability to have our needs met is severely impeded.
 - ii. We don’t go to God for our needs, we try to fix it ourselves (and mess it up worse!).
 - iii. Or we make decisions based on our desires instead of upon God’s will...and those decisions come back to bite us.
 - iv. Poverty’s roots are found in sin. In many nations, poverty is the result not of poor soil, but of governments who steal their people’s sustenance.
 - v. Poverty is rooted in injustice which finds its roots in sin.
 - vi. Those who are poor need the gospel the most and are most open to it. The gospel gives hope to the hopeless!
 2. **To heal the brokenhearted.**
 - a. Sin breaks hearts. It breaks relationships. It ruins people’s lives because it causes them to act in ways that are self-centered.
 - b. Look at people whose hearts are broken, their dreams are crushed, their hopes have been snuffed out. A cheating spouse, an abusive family, an alcoholic in the home. Broken hearts. All around us! And Jesus wants to heal them!
 - c. Is your heart broken? Jesus came to HEAL IT!
 3. **To proclaim liberty (deliverance) to the captives:**
 - a. Sin makes people captive and enslaves them. Almost everyone has an addiction, its social acceptability varies, but everyone is a captive to the slavery of sin. What is your addiction? Do you crave approval? Do you seek pleasure? Do you find solace in alcohol or do cigarettes rob your paycheck?
 - b. You won’t find condemnation here but you will find liberty!
 - c. Jesus has come to set you free. Jesus doesn’t want you to be a slave to anything or anyone.
 - d. But freedom comes at a cost...you must lay down control of your life and turn it over to Jesus. He alone can set you free.
 - e. *Hebrew word for deliverance means to set free: to take and hand over to or leave for another: to assist in giving birth.*
 4. **Recovery of sight to the blind.**
 - a. Sin blinds us and Jesus has come to heal our spiritual and moral blindness.
 - i. We were unable to comprehend spiritual truths. The devil had blinded our eyes to the love of God.

- ii. Satan doesn't want us to see the sad fact that we are lost without Jesus. And he wants to keep us from seeing our need as well as our Savior.
 - iii. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson went on a camping trip. After a good meal, they lay down for the night inside their tent and went to sleep. Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend. "Watson, look up and tell me what you see." Watson replied, "I see millions and millions of stars." "What does that tell you?" Watson pondered for a minute and began to talk about the vastness of creation. Holmes finally interrupted his dear friend and said, "No Watson, someone has stolen our tent!"
 - iv. Blindness is so blinding! We cannot see what is right in front of us! And don't think that just non-Christians suffer from spiritual blindness. The letter to the church in Laodicea in the book of Revelation deals with blind Christians! Christians who can't see the work of God because of religion and pride.
 - b. God cares about the recovery and restoration of what the devil has stolen from you. Spiritual and physical blindness Jesus came to heal.
 - 5. **To set at liberty those who are oppressed:**
 - a. Sin oppresses its victims, and the Messiah comes to bring liberty to the oppressed. (broken into pieces, fragments).
 - b. Jesus didn't come to only preach deliverance or even to only bring deliverance. Jesus came to be deliverance for us. He came to make us whole (sozo, saved means this).
 - iv. **Jesus comes to set you free to become who you were made to be!**
 - 1. Do you ever feel like you have been placed in a box, cornered and forced to be something you are not? That isn't freedom. It is bondage. What an awesome God we have that cares enough to help us become what we never dreamt we could be.
3. I sometimes wonder what Jesus' countenance must have looked like. He had the Spirit of God upon Him in His fullness and was anointed (appointed by Divine calling) to perform this ministry. I imagine Jesus looked like a man on fire. Have you ever seen a man on fire (figuratively speaking)? There is no quenching his attitude, there is no suppressing his spirit. He is passionate about what he is doing and going and saying.
- a. This same Jesus has commanded us to do the same in Matthew 28:19-20 *"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all I have commanded you."*
 - i. Previously He had sent His disciples out two by two to proclaim the coming kingdom. Now He was establishing it!
 - ii. Our mission statement says, **"We exist to be a safe harbor of God's love where people are transformed into devoted followers of Christ who change their world with the power, love and grace of God."**
 - iii. Our Vision statement concludes with ... **"Who change their world by the power, love and grace of God."**
 - 1. We can only change "our" world...that is the world you have influence on. The people you brush shoulders with every day is the world you are called to change and influence. Will you do it?
 - 2. John 14:12, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."*
 - a. What kind of works was Jesus talking about? The same kind that he talked about in Luke 4:18-21. *Preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the*

brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind and to deliver those who are oppressed.

- b. We are not called to just sit and encourage one another. We are not called to build huge buildings, even though those things are necessary.
- c. We are not called to grow one another into spiritually fat children of God, even though teaching and ministry one to another are vitally important!
- d. WE are called to take the gospel to a hurting people in a broken world!
 - i. You know who they are. Some are your neighbors. Some are co-workers. Some are your friends.
 - ii. We are called to reach out and to heal the brokenhearted! There are souls out there who are crushed under the load of sin, whose lives are wrecked and ruined by the powers of darkness, who have no hope for today much less for eternity and who have no knowledge of what Jesus can do for them!
 - iii. It's our mission to tell them about Jesus and to believe God for miracles of salvation, healing and deliverance for them because they can't believe for themselves.

4. Will you do it?