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Understanding The Carnal Mind

* Jessie's easter egg costume

Every good preacher knows that they are supposed to preach on the resurrection on Easter morning. And by that they generally mean that they are supposed to talk about how great it is that Jesus rose from the dead after being three days in the tomb. And that is wonderful and true.

But sometimes I wonder what Jesus would think if he were in no one of our Easter morning resurrection sermons. I mean, sometimes I wonder if Jesus would listen to preachers like me talk about the resurrection and think to Himself "you know, Jason...I love you, but you're making the same mistake Martha did. You're talking about the resurrection as though it were merely an event". Martha was looking forward to some event where her brother would get his life back. We're looking back to some event, or forward. And I'm not certainly not saying that there are no events. And I'm certainly not saying that there wasn't a literal day in history where Christ was raised from the dead.

What I am saying, is that Jesus turned to Martha that day and said something really really interesting. "Martha" He said, "I **am** the resurrection".

What an amazing thing to say. He didn't say, "Don't worry Martha, Lazarus is going to be resurrected". Or "Don't worry Martha, I'm going to be resurrected after I'm crucified." He said "I am the resurrection." **In other words "I am life from the dead"**. In other words "you all, will know resurrection when you are joined to My life."

Yes, our experience of resurrection isn't just getting our life back, its getting Christ's life. And Christ's resurrection wasn't just getting His life back for Himself. No, that resurrection life was given to us, so that we could have and abide in that life.

And so the Scriptures say

- Romans 7:4 *"We were joined to Him who was raised from the dead"*
- Eph 2:6 *and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly {places} in Christ Jesus,*
- Col 2:12 *having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*
- Col 3:1 *Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*

And so, I really believe we shouldn't just talk about the resurrection as an event in history only once a year on Easter. **I believe we should preach Christ as the resurrection, and us in Him, in resurrection life.**

And so I'm not really going to preach on the event of the resurrection today. And if you've been around here very long you know that I preach about us being brought into His resurrection life all the time. So I'm not going to talk specifically about that spiritual reality today either.

What really interests me today is knowing how we can live and abide, in a regular, day to day basis, in that resurrected life – and experience all that that life is. Now that really interests me.

Here's what I'm interested in: I want to know and experience, in a literal, life-transforming way, the one that is the resurrection. I want to experience practically, as I walk through my day, the resurrected life of Jesus in my mind, my emotions, and my will. That really excites me.

And so today I want to talk about living in the resurrection. And that's kind of an Easter-way of saying that I want to talk about what it means, practically speaking, to be transformed into His image. Well, tying it in with what I talked about last week, I think in order for us to be transformed into His image (not just looking like Him, but literally expressing His life)...there has to be an increase of His government within us.

I really believe that, when it comes down to it, our transformation, or sanctification, is quite literally the process of Christ's government within us increasing. Christ's reign and rule and dominion increasing within us. Remember last week we said that every Christian knows that Christ is a King. But the question is "is His dominion established in your soul."

Well, you might be tempted to say, "I gave him my heart a long time ago, and I told Him that I was totally His. I told Him that I was absolutely surrendered to Him. And I meant it. So its settled". Well, I don't think its quite that easy. Yes, you've let the king move into the land. But here's another question for you: **Are all of the cities of your heart the conquered territory of the King, where He can exercise His life and reign freely?** Or, though on paper the kingdom belongs to Him, are there stronghold cities that He has yet to gain control of.

You know, God gave the entire land to Joshua, but they only possessed what was given when they took the cities. So, in you, are there cities of uprising where the "I" still lives. I'm not talking about just your sinful, ugly cities. I'm talking about both the ugly cities and the beautiful cities...where Christ isn't the only governor.

So here is what I want to suggest to you today. And we're going to talk about this with more specifics in the weeks to come. **But here's what I want to suggest: We are like a land dominated by an enemy, that needs to have all of its cities taken captive by the government of Christ.**

And, if Christ can take these cities in you, then you will find yourself living in an experience of His resurrected life. But if these cities remain unconquered (though they

may wave the banner of Christ's name, or though they may want a truce), then you will only ever experience your life in those areas.

And so I want to take this morning and compare our experience of Christ being formed in us with some Old Testament stories of the Israelites taking the promised land. And I don't think for a minute that I'm making these parallels up. I believe that these Old Testament stories were recorded for the very purpose of making sense of our experiences in this process. I truly believe that. I think that the story of the increase of the Israelites government through the promised land is meant to help us understand the increase of Christ's government within us. I believe that's why it was recorded.

And actually, just personally speaking, the things that I'm going to share this morning have been really helpful for me in understanding what the Lord is trying to do in my life. And I hope some of you will see these things and better understand both how the Lord is working in your life.

You see, coming to a revelation of Christ as our life is essential. It is like crossing the Jordan. And we talked about that several weeks ago. We looked at Joshua and how they crossed the Jordan and immediately circumcised the entire camp to show that flesh had no place or inheritance in this land. So, crossing the Jordan is like coming into Christ. Its like coming into His life, His nature, and out of our own.

And in this new land, Christ is the life. And there are cities that you didn't build. And there are wells that you didn't dig, and crops you didn't plant. And the other side of the Jordan represents living in the flesh...where we have to produce, and build, and do, and work. Really, its coming out of the old covenant and into the new.

Now, most everybody here knows that we talk a lot here about having a revelation of Christ as our life. And when I really began to see what it meant that I had been crucified with Christ and it was no longer I that lived but Christ that lived in me....so many things began to make sense. And in a lot of ways things in me began to change. It was the biggest breakthrough of my entire Christian life. And more things have changed in the last year then in all the other years added up.

I came to really understand that the flesh doesn't inherit the land. What that really means. Seeing the difference between flesh and spirit. Seeing that I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And so much of the last year have been devoted to laying that foundation. And until that foundation was laid, there is no hope for actually taking the land. Because if you're not living in the land, abiding in Christ, there is no hope for transformation. No hope for growth. Because the flesh profits nothing.

But, one of my misunderstandings, was that I thought that, once I crossed over the Jordan that the whole land was conquered territory. Now that I was seeing, I should be able to, more or less, abide in Christ all the time, and allow Him to be my life in every circumstance, action, emotion, affection, etc.

And, I don't know if you're like me, but I found that, though something had drastically changed in my understanding of the gospel, and in my experience in some ways, there were still many areas that didn't feel very much like the life of Christ.

[* and I know that there are some people that are listening to me thinking that I'm talking about how after I got saved I still sinned in certain areas...AND THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT! I'm talking about AFTER I'd been saved for years, finding out the difference between my life and the life of Christ in substance...and wanting to bring forth His life, rather than my good imitation]

Anyway....you see, as we begin to come into an experience of Christ as our life, we find that there are enemies in the land that are fighting for government over cities. I found that there was an issue of government. Mine or Christ's. Not just my way or His way. No, **my life or His life. More importantly, my mind or His mind.**

Yes, I found that there was an enemy in the land, and that enemy was my **carnal mind**. Now, many of us think about the devil as our primary enemy. And while He may be that, he has one major tool that He uses and it's the carnal mind. The carnal mind is the playground of the devil.

And you can never fight the enemy with the carnal mind because he has dominion over that territory. He governs that city. We must learn (and this is what I want to focus on for some time) the depraved, blind, deceptive nature of this enemy – the carnal mind.

Romans 8 says *“because the carnal is enmity toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.*

What an indictment! It doesn't say that it is AT enmity. It says it IS enmity. Another way to say that is that the carnal mind is the enemy of the Lord. And it doesn't say that it is “not very good” at subjecting itself to God. It says that it CANNOT subject itself to God. Wow.

Well, what is the carnal mind. It's the mind of the flesh. It looks at everything from an earth based, flesh based, natural, temporal, material perspective. It is totally self-oriented and self-interested. And it always wants to know, think, learn, see, comprehend, on its own terms, and according to its own light.

And so, as we seek to possess the Land (or, maybe rather to be fully governed by the Lord), we come up against carnal mind cities, or fortresses, (the dwelling place of the enemies ideas) that are in the land and not under the government of the mind of Christ.

You see, though the land had been given to the Israelites, the land had not yet been possessed by the Israelites. It was theirs, but it was not yet taken. Joshua led them into the land and declared to them that the Lord had given it to them...but there were enemies in the land. There were things already there that were established as fortresses that did not want to hand the territory over to Joshua.

And so with us, we must both cross the Jordan, and then **dispossess everything that stands in contradiction, or resists the reality of our union with Christ**. Until we do, the inhabitants of the land (which are the things in us that resist Christ) will totally dominate us. Totally dominate our experience.

And that's the case because we try to dwell in the land along side the inhabitants of the land...and the two don't mix. The people of Israel tried to do that in the book of Judges. They tried to dwell in the land alongside the inhabitants. And the Lord just had to keep raising up temporary deliverances because they wouldn't take the land.

I think much of our Christian experience is like that. God raising up temporary deliverances to get us out of the mess we've gotten into by not taking the land. He feels so sorry for us, He'll raise up a Deborah, a Samson, a Gideon, and give us temporary relief from a problem that only exists because we're trying to live along side the other people of the land.

Anyway, so we go into this land and we find that fortresses, strongholds, have been erected. And there is a fight. And the fight is for who's **mind** governs the city. **And practically, it feels like...who's concept of truth FEELS like reality.**

- Is it the carnal mind that wins in this area of your life – that dictates to you what reality is. Things like:
 - You're a failure
 - You're a success
 - You need to fear this or that. This emotion is reality
 - Its all about what you can produce.
- Or is it Christ Himself, who is your life, dictating to you what is real and true. Does Christ's mind have dominion in that area? **Has His life become your experience in that area?**

So, here was my problem. Though I saw Christ as my life, the carnal mind still has control of many territories or cities in the Land. And oftentimes we think that we can hold on to these carnal mind cities, and still experience Christ as our life. And friends, that's impossible. That's what the book of Joshua teaches us.

That's why some people can run around preaching Christ as the life of the believer, and the gospel as an exchange of life, etc. and bring forth no manifestation of the life of Christ. Because, though they see the truth of it, there are so many strongholds of the mind, areas that aren't under the government of the mind of Christ, that there is no expression of that government.

Proverbs tells us: "how can two walk together unless they are of one mind?" Friends, we will never walk in union with the resurrected Christ if there are two minds in the land. If

our carnal mind hasn't come under the dominion of Christ. If your mind is arguing with Christ about what is real and true...how are you supposed to abide in Christ?

But, in order for you to experience Christ as your life in all things, there needs to be a conquering of those carnal mind cities, so that every thought is taken captive in obedience to Jesus Christ (the mind of Christ). Where every thought lines up with the mind of Christ. Where every thought corresponds with the truth as it is in Jesus.

And so there is joy in first receiving the truth that Christ is our life, but before we know it, we're up against one of these fortresses in the mind. A place where the enemy has blinded our eyes from His light, and where we still see with our own. And we see this city and it looks daunting. It looks to large. And it makes us feel stuck.

And if you're like me, our first reaction is simply to look back to Egypt and say something like "you know, Egypt wasn't really that bad. Actually, now that I think of it, I was a pretty good brick builder back there. I wasn't half bad at making bricks without straw"

And I think God would say to us..."no, you can't go back there. That's where the "I" still lives. That's where you live in the flesh, under the law. That's where you live in Adam. And it's a condemned place to live. It's a city under judgment. You can't look back to Egypt, it's a city under the judgment of God. There are plagues there. You must go forward into the land and leave the flesh behind.

And, we want to say "yeah, but I only know how to fight earthly carnal battles. I can't fight spiritual battles."

And the Lord says "the weapons of our warfare aren't the carnal mind. But we will take this city, this area in you, so that Christ can increase His government in you. The only thing to go back to is Adam – living in the flesh"

And I think that is why Jesus says that "anybody that puts his hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for service in the kingdom of God". What does that mean? Well, I think He's saying that there is only one way to serve in this kingdom. The flesh doesn't serve in the kingdom. Its not fit for service. You can't look back to the old covenant and think you're going to bring that thing back into service. You can't look back to Adam and think that he's going to do anything in this land. No, if anything is going to be done with this plow, it will be "the one that mightily works within you"

And again, I think that is what is pictured in the story of Lots wife. Remember, she is fleeing a city under judgment. There was a place that she used to live that came under the condemnation of God. And she, with desire in her heart, looked back to the dwelling place that was under the wrath of God and she came under the judgment that was on that city.

Ok, and so God is wanting us to take these strongholds, these fortresses, these cities where the carnal mind has the government, and Christ does not. Where we see all things according to the flesh. Where we relate to all things in Adam.

And when we take them, he is wanting us to destroy every single Moabite or Amorite that lives there, and not leave anything alive. And, remember the stories of how God dispossessed those nations. Everything that breathed had to be destroyed. There could be no mixture of the people. No mixture of the seed. Even the infants had to die, so that the wrong seed would be wiped out.

Anything that was left alive would grow up to carry a sword that would be, sooner or later, pointed against the king of the land. And anything of you that is left un-crucified will come back to challenge the king. All has to die. There is nothing of usefulness in the other seed. It all must go to the cross in our experience.

The Gideonites (I think) are a perfect example of this in the Old Testament. They were supposed to be wiped out, and the Israelites made a covenant with them to let them live...and they were forever a thorn in the Israelites side. Every area in you where the carnal mind is not replaced with the mind of Christ will be a thorn in your side.

And so it's a progressive possessing of the land. IN other words, its an increase of His government in you. Where you no longer live (and see all things by the carnal mind)...and where Christ becomes the life and king of you His kingdom.

Now, we have to close here, but we're going to talk more about this in some specific ways in the coming weeks. I think it's a really important issue. But let me just close by saying a few things that I found in me that were unhelpful tendencies as I was taking the land.

1. I got so focused on the one battle that was before me, and the size of the giants there, I forgot to remember, and thus abide in, the land that had already been taken.
2. Because of that intense focus on the next city to be taken, I don't allow myself to enjoy the process of the increase of His government. I fail to really enjoy dwelling in the land that has already been conquered.
3. I wanted to take the cities in me in my order. I try to choose the city based on how much it bothers me. But sometimes number one on my list is number 45 on God's list...and He knows that until I take this other land, I'll never have a chance at taking the city that's bothering me the most.