



for the week of July 01, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:
good news...eternally secure

daily life notes for individuals & couples

Introductions

Pastor Ryan spoke this weekend about our eternal security in Jesus. The chapter from John 10 is copied below in its entirety, but we invite you to use your own Bible so you can make note of verses or ideas that interest or speak to you in some way. It's always good to read a passage at least twice, so that your mind begins to get involved with what the Holy Spirit is saying. You can view various Bible versions online at sites like www.biblegateway.com

Note: Saturday is used as a "sabbath" or "rest from our every day work responsibilities" experience, but you might work on Saturday and be off some other time during the week that would be more appropriate to celebrating rest. Please feel free to adjust the **Life Notes** schedule to fit your own.

the Word: John 10:22-42

Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. The Jews gathered around him and talked to him.

Jews: *"How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."*

Jesus: *"I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."*

Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him.

Jesus: *"I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"*

Jews: *"We are not stoning you for any of these, but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."*

Jesus: *"Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'? If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came — and the Scripture cannot be broken — what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."*

Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Here he stayed and many people came to him.

People: *"Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true."*

And in that place many believed in Jesus.

Monday: what makes us feel secure

We will have a week of reflecting on security - and that will be both a challenging and encouraging experience for us all. Why challenging? Because security isn't an emotion or condition we can separate from our experience here in this world. We can be spiritually secure but still afraid or guarded or self-sufficient or prideful or physically/temporally insecure. So we'll see if we can relax and let the Holy Spirit move God's words into a greater reality in our lives.

Today, begin by reading John 10:22-42 at least two times. Journal or discuss with your spouse or study partner any words or phrases that stand out for you.

Spend time soul-searching/journaling as we look carefully at this topic of security. The answers to the following questions might be extra difficult for some, but let's try to examine anyway. Security is tied to many things in our past and present, so let's see if we can better understand what we mean by security and, as we progress through the week, what God means.

Examen: an examination of both sides of an issue or a question.

Examen: *Growing up, what made you feel secure or safe?*
Growing up, what made you feel insecure or unsafe?

At this time in your life, what makes you feel secure or safe?
At this time in your life, what makes you feel insecure or unsafe?

What behaviors do you exhibit when you feel safe or secure?
What behaviors do you exhibit when you feel unsafe or insecure?

How might those who know you best say you act or react when you feel safe or secure?
How might those who know you best say you act or react when you feel unsafe or insecure?

Spend time in prayer as we begin to focus on this very important topic that affects each one of us. Pray for your friends, for those you love, for those you don't know very well yet - pray that this week will bring some clarity, some stability, some real growth, some new ability to rest in God's security.

Tuesday: what makes us a safe place for others

Today, begin your day silently reading John 10:22-42 and Philippians 4:1-9. We are looking at these passages to further examine how we deal with security and the lack of security - in this case, in our relationships.

Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Journal or discuss what God is saying to you in these passages - and try to see through the grid of security...and insecurity.

Note that one of the most-quoted passages, Philippians 4:4, comes on the heels of a plea for healthy relationship. Paul wants two women who are dear friends and coworkers for the gospel to agree with each other. When we don't - when our relationships are broken - they affect those around us and, quite often, are broken due to insecurity of some kind. Sometimes we are "safe" for those we love - when we feel secure and "in control" of life. And sometimes we are unsafe for others, when we feel insecure, burdened, anxious about life.

Examen: *When or with whom are you a safe person (for others)?*
When or with whom are you not a very safe person (for others)?

What behaviors do you exhibit when you're a safe person for others?
What behaviors do you exhibit when you're not a very safe person for others?

How might those who know you best say you behave when you are a safe person for others - when you feel secure?
How might those who know you best say you behave when you are not a very safe person for others - when you don't feel secure?

What role does "trying to be in control" play in your daily life?

Wednesday: security our way

Read and reflect on the following passages as we begin our time today.

Jesus: *"I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."*

People in the crowd: *"Sir, from now on give us this bread."*

Jesus : *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."* (John 6:32-40)

As we begin to see, Jesus' idea of security and ours are very different. He doesn't seem to be focused on our comfort in this world, but on our relational and eternal security. He cares that we trust him, that we live honestly, gracefully and lovingly with each other. God's idea of security isn't our natural idea.

Today, let's pray to be aware of how our own sense of security runs so much of our day. Today, let's be careful observers of ourselves. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you keenly aware of the ways you try to control situations, people, relationships, difficulties, challenges. Become an observer of yourself. See where you try to play God's role.

Historically and/or right now in life, I find myself looking to this _____ (person, place, milestone, situation, treasure, achievement) for security...

Today, I found myself _____ in order to try and control an outcome, a relationship, a person, a situation.

Today, I found myself trusting in _____ instead of God.

What security(ies) did this world try to offer me today?

What security(ies) did God try to offer me today?

Which set of securities felt better and why?

Thursday: the promises of security

Perhaps you've been able to better understand our need for security and our behaviors related to our longing for security in this world. Today, we'll begin to focus on the kind of security God offers us.

Journal or discuss those times in your life when you've felt most secure.

Where were you?

Who was there?

What was going on?

What people or ingredients in the situation helped you feel secure?

Now, spend a moment defining security as you understand it:

Security is...

Some passages for your reflection.

"But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.'" (Isaiah 43)

"'You are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior. I have revealed and saved and proclaimed—I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'that I am God. Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?'" (Isaiah 43)

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one." (John 10)

God is our God. He says so over and over in Scripture. Jesus, many times in John's gospel, assures us that he comes from the Father and that he and the Father are one. He says that we belong to him and that no one can snatch us from his hand. There is security in that truth greater than any security we could imagine, but we still live here in this world. And when we are here in this world, it is difficult for us not to "hold on" and try to control events...people...relationships...the next minute.

What does security look like from God's perspective?

What does God promise you as security?

How would your daily life change if you trusted in God's security?

When you pray, are you asking God to change you/your perspectives or others/the world around you?

Close your time in prayer - reading over your writings. Ask God to help you rest a little more in his security today. Ask him to help you release your own hold on life.

Friday: secure in every way

There is so much we can consider and learn about our eternal security. Security in Father, Son and Spirit is so much more than a future destiny. As we learn to put our trust in God and define “security” in his terms, our lives here gain such rich meaning. We become free to be people of God rather than people of this world. We learn to measure our days not on how well we did in this world’s terms, but on how well we did turning things over to God. We become able, more and more, to rely on God’s grace to handle the details of this life so that we can be about the work of his kingdom - the work of loving God back, loving our neighbors, loving the world.

Read Romans 8:28-39 out loud.

“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. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ (Psalm 44)

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Paul knew that the psalmists and Israelites struggled to trust God with life, just as we do. And yet Paul also knew that Jesus transforms our lives and that nothing can possibly separate us from God’s love.

Reflect on real security today. And if you have a few more moments, list all of those things that cause you to feel anxious and then substitute those things into the following sentences. For example,

“I know that God is working good in _____ (any situation or relationship)”

“In _____ (list any situation - job, conflict with a family member, financial need), I am more than a conqueror...”

“_____ (list any present difficulty, challenge or insecurity) cannot separate me from the love of God...”

Just see what unfolds. Fill in specifics until you begin to relax in the security God offers.

Pastor Ryan gave us a picture of his son, holding tight to Ryan’s collar as he drifts off to sleep. Ryan shared with us that Jesus is holding us...and the Father is holding us. So we are safe - eternally secure.

From *The Power and the Wisdom*, John L. McKenzie, 1965.

"The basic element seems to be recognition. We recognize that the person we have encountered speaks to our innermost being, supplies our needs, satisfies our desires. We recognize that this person gives life meaning. I do not say a new meaning, but meaning simply, for we realize that before we encountered this person life had no real meaning. We recognize that this person has revealed to us not only himself but our own true self as well. We recognize that we cannot be our own true self except by union with this person. In him the obscure is illuminated, the uncertain yields to the certain, insecurity replaced by a deep sense of security. In him we find we have achieved an understanding of many things which baffled us. We recognize in his person strength and power which we can sense passing from him to us. Most certainly, if most obscurely, we recognize that in this person we have encountered God and that we shall not encounter God in any other way."

Saturday: Sabbath

We encourage you to let Saturdays be a "mini Sabbath" moment. If Saturday is a work day for you, simply exchange this day in Life Notes for the day you have off. It's really important to learn to simply "be" with Jesus, with yourself, with those you love, without an "agenda." Sabbath simply means "cease" and "rest." So, today, spend moments truly resting with God the Father, Son and Spirit. "Cease" all of the detailed work and worries that creep into your life everyday.

Couples, if possible, spend some Sabbath moments together reading, taking a walk, drinking coffee outside, sharing a song you both like, inviting friends over and cooking for them, taking a drive or a bike ride, exercising, watching a movie. Whatever you might like to do to truly rest, do it together. You might laugh or cry with God about things that have happened in your life together this week. Just let the time unfold. Sense God's love for you; seek his peace and pursue it.

Families, spend a Sabbath day together. Let different members of the family choose what to do each week. Simply enjoy God's company together. Or maybe serve somewhere as a family or invite neighbors over, simply because you care.

Discover Jesus in all you do. He'll delight and amaze you.