#388 – Church Retreat (Stephen Zhu) – 24.06.17

Prayer

- The hymn we are studying is “Fade, Fade, Each Earthly Joy.” It ties in a lot with Ecclesiastes, so keep yesterday’s message in mind as we go through the hymn.

Read hymn [Shawn]

- OVERVIEW
    - Structure of the hymn: progression of where you’re at.
        - v1: You were in the world, but have now decided to follow Jesus. You want the earthly joys to fade and the tender ties to be broken because only by dying to the world can you have Jesus.
        - v2: You’ve been following Jesus and have already stated v1. This reiterates your desire to stay in Jesus; you don’t want to be tempted back to following the earthly joys because you know they’re temporal and cannot satisfy.
        - v3: You’ve been following Jesus for a while and as such can confidently and cheerfully leave behind the dreams of this world. Those dreams only leave a dismal void within you—Jesus alone can satisfy.
        - v4: You’re about to die, so everything on Earth is literally fading. However, you’re completely at peace because you know you’re going to be with Jesus for eternity, and the peace and rest that the world could never give will now be yours.

Read Isaiah 40:6-8 [Matthew]

- These verses show a contrast between the things of this world and God. All earthly things—including people—are temporal; they will wither and fade like grass. However, God and His Word stand forever. The gospel is the one thing we can cling to, knowing that it will endure beyond the grave.
- I’m going to read the hymn one more time. This time, I want you to think about this question and share your thoughts: ***What sorts of contrasts do you notice in the hymn between the things of this world and Jesus?***

Read hymn [Me]

DISCUSSION

- Temporal vs. Eternal:
    - Earthly things are temporal (“Perishing things of clay / Born but for one brief day”) — they will eventually fade away whether you like it or not, for you too are temporal; James 4:14 says that your life is “a mist that appears for a little and then vanishes.”
    - Jesus is eternal. You will either be with Him or apart from Him for eternity; you can either cling to the world and die with it or come to Jesus and “ever stay” with Him.
        - 1 John 2:17 – And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.
- Darkness vs. light:

    - "Dark is the wilderness" of this earth, and the best and brightest things it has to offer are "dreams of night." They leave a "dismal void" in your soul—you remain dark and empty even if you have all of them.
        - In Ecclesiastes 2 Solomon says that he didn't withhold his heart from any pleasure, but it was all vanity and striving after wind.
    - Jesus is light ("dawning bright").
        - 1 John 1:5 – This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.
        - Jesus says in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
- False vs. true promises of rest:
    - The world promises rest through its earthly joys and "tender ties," but ultimately, "Earth has no resting-place" — you cannot find peace in the world.
        - Ecc 2:17 – So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.
    - "Jesus alone can bless," and Jesus alone can satisfy (v3). We can have everlasting peace in the "sweet scenes of rest."
        - John 14:27 – Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.

- So far, we've only discussed part of the hymn. We haven't talked much about what's probably the most important line, repeated 12 times in the hymn: "Jesus is mine." ***What does that mean, and what does it have to do with the rest of the hymn?***

DISCUSSION

Read Philippians 3:7-11 [Me]

- It is because Jesus is ours that we can say everything else in the hymn. We can gladly bid farewell to all of this world's joys because what Christ offers far surpasses anything this world has to offer.
    - Importantly, **we can only gain Christ if we die to this world**. As we heard in the Ruth message, if we try to cling to our life in this world, we will remain alone. We'll hear more on this during tomorrow's message as well. Paul says that the reason why he counts everything as loss and rubbish is so that he can gain Christ. If he does not do this—if he does not die to the world like Jesus did—he cannot gain Christ, and he will have no hope of attaining resurrection and eternity united to God.
        - Even if we refuse to acknowledge it, all our gain is rubbish. It's just a bunch of breath (Ecclesiastes).

Read 1 Corinthians 1:30 [Me]

- It is because of the gospel that we can be in Christ, and He is righteousness and sanctification and redemption to us—things the world cannot even come close to offering.

- Only in Christ can we have the righteousness that allows us to spend eternity with God in heaven instead of eternity apart from Him in hell. “Jesus is mine” expresses the glorious truth that we can indeed be united to God.
    - Jeremiah 31:33 – For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. **And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

Q: Does anyone have any comments?

- Before we sing Fade, Fade, Each Earthly Joy, we’ll sing My Savior’s Love. This hymn shows what it is that allows us to wish from our hearts that earthly joys would fade—after understanding just how amazing God’s love is as shown through the gospel, we can love Him instead of the world. As 1 John 4:19 says, “We love him, because he first loved us.”