

August 8, 2020

## Good morning, Everybody.

Our teens and camp staff are on the road even as you read this. So . . . we should pray for their safe and joyful return. It'll be so good to see them back and to have them in the services tomorrow.



I thought that it would be good to talk through what we'll be doing this Lord's Day. Last week we finished our extended series in I Corinthians. Some have asked what we'll be turning to now. That's been something that I've thought about prayerfully for several months; actually, even longer than that. Probably since early last year. But certainly more often and more deliberately as our work in I Corinthians began to draw to its close.

Coming to confidence about the Lord's leading in a sermon series is a process both methodical and mysterious. The methodological side includes taking (in so far as possible) practical account of all the factors that are knowable about our present needs and foreseeable about our future circumstances. The mysterious side is entirely the Lord's doing. He alone knows all. And He alone chooses how to impress a burden or a subject upon a preacher's mind.

All of the Word of God is profitable at all times (II Timothy 3:16-17). So from one standpoint it's not possible to make a *major* mistake in choosing a book or a topic for preaching. But any preacher of at least some experience can testify that there's nothing known to man like coming under the *burden of the word of the LORD* as a result of God Himself preoccupying his mind and firing his heart with a weighty message.

Through the years I've deliberately not talked about this very much; certainly not publicly when we've begun new series. I've had what has seemed to me to be a good reason for not doing so. But perhaps I should have, if for no other reason than for the sake of attempting to assure everyone that the books we've begun were not chosen simply out of personal curiosity, or because recently I'd read something blazing about them. They've been chosen because I found my mind returning involuntarily to them again and again over an extended period of time beforehand. This inner experience is what I habitually take to be the Lord's

answering my prayers for direction by His working within my natural faculties of reasoning, feeling, desiring, and planning. David wrote, *I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; indeed, my mind instructs me in the night* (Psalm 16:7). He, of course, was the recipient of revelation. We are not. But I do believe decidedly that there is such a thing as the subjective leading of God's Spirit within our spirits. We may be mistaken in our perceptions of it. But it is nevertheless real, and I earnestly pray for it.

So when we begin a series, I do so with a high degree of confidence that the Lord has led in it. Only twice in my ministry have I come to feel that I was mistaken, at least in thinking that we were to continue through the book's *entirety*. Once was in the first church I pastored; once was here at Mount Calvary many years ago when we began the book of Acts. In both cases I discontinued the series and quickly came to feel confirmed in doing so.

All that to say this . . . that when I announce a new Lord's Day morning series in a few weeks or a few months, I want to do so with a confident spirit and a burdened heart. I'd very much appreciate your praying with me about it.

But for tomorrow morning, our text will be one that has been on my mind for more than a week. If you'd like to pre-read it, it's Malachi 3:13-18. My intention is to preach at least two messages from it, and I trust that it will give us reassuring light on a sometimes dark and bewildering phenomenon in life.

Tomorrow night we'll be observing the Lord's Table for the first time in five months. Our attempts to stay virus free necessitate some change in our approach, at least for this first time, but the spirit of our service will be just as it always is; Christ-centered, Cross-centered, and reverent. We can prepare our hearts tomorrow afternoon by reading anything having to do with our Lord's love and self-sacrifice in the work of our redemption.

May the Lord graciously help you in all things today; and prepare our hearts for a sacred and refreshing enjoyment of His day tomorrow.

Praying for You,

Pastor Minnick