

NAZARENE BIBLE COLLEGE
CHAPEL MESSAGE
READING THE X-RAYS
SEPTEMBER 8, 2010

I. Introduction

A. Making An Appointment for My Annual Physical:

1. This was important because of my family history of prostate cancer.
2. This summer my dad was diagnosed with the disease.
3. As is the standard medical practice, before they could prescribe an appropriate treatment to cure him of the disease, they wanted to determine as precisely as possible the exact nature of his condition.
4. So his doctor order an extensive battery of X-rays and MRI screenings.
5. This medical practice illustrates a similar spiritual principle that relates directly to our chapel focus for this trimester: which is purity.
6. In our pursuit of purity, we must first be willing to subject ourselves to intense examination by the Great Physician.

II. Exposition

A. There Is A Perfect Example of This Principle In Our Primary Text for the Year: Isaiah 6

1. Isaiah was the high priest: he was religious, he was righteous, he was well-respected, he was the supreme spiritual leader for the nation.
2. However, notice what happened when he stood in the magnified presence of God?
3. As the indescribable light of God's glory and holiness penetrated and permeated Isaiah's entire being, it was as if it was a spiritual x-ray exposing the deepest, hidden aspects of Isaiah's heart and soul to the scrutiny of God.
4. Through this scrutiny, a moral and spiritual tumor was exposed: the tumor of unclean lips.
5. It would be fair to conclude that at this point this tumor was quite small.
 - a. The tumor had been undetected by Isaiah as he went about the daily routines of the priesthood.
 - b. There were as of yet no tale-tale symptoms raising red flags.
 - c. To the untrained eye of the casual observers around him, he was still the picture of spiritual health.
6. However, as small as the cancer may have been, deep in his soul a malignant mass was forming, a destructive mutation was slowly building, cannibalizing all healthy tissue around it to feed its insatiable appetite.
7. If left unexposed and untreated for too long, the prognosis for Isaiah would be fatal.
8. Before Isaiah could be pure, this impurity had to be fully exposed to himself and to the Almighty God who resides in the Holy of Holies.

B. Application to All Believers

1. What does all of this mean to us? In our own pursuit of purity, we must present ourselves without any self-preserving guardedness or delusions to the penetrating light of God's holiness.
2. How many of us here tonight have been through the process of an x-ray or MRI?
 - a. Then you know that the preparation alone can be rather disgusting and humiliating.
 - b. Sometimes you have to drink this, or flush out that, or insert you know what into you know where, all of which tends to make your body do things you never want it to do.
 - c. Then you have to strip down and put on a gown that doesn't flatter any part of anyone's body, so that you can parade around half naked in front of perfect strangers, which, come to think of it, might be better than parading in front of friends that you would, then, have to face the next day at work or church.
3. This kind of personal exposure that precedes purity is never comfortable, pleasant, or easy for anyone.
4. It is not an appealing prospect to stand totally exposed and vulnerable before the all seeing eye of the indescribably holy God of the universe.
5. But it is the only way, if we want to find the cure for the deep, destructive, diseases that plague our soul.

C. What, Then, Is the Prescription for Such Soul Healing?

1. There Are Two Standard Procedures that the Great Physician Requires.
2. The first procedure is given to us in Hebrews 4:12-13.

“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. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” NIV
3. God's first prescription for spiritual diagnosis is to expose ourselves to the light of His glory reflected in the Word. However, for this to be effective we cannot approach the Word casually with dull and distracted senses or defensively with hardened hearts. Instead, we must approach it humbly and submissively like David when he wrote in Psalm 139:23-24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (NIV)
4. The second procedure is given to us in James 5:16.

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” NIV
5. God's second prescription for spiritual diagnosis is to develop close relationships of accountability and encouragement with like-minded believers.
6. We must be sure to select believers with whom we can be transparent regarding the struggles, pains, short-comings, and even spiritual failures of our lives.
7. We must choose persons who have the emotional objectivity and the spiritual insight to see the first symptoms of hidden spiritual disease, and who have the love and courage to speak honestly with us about these issues.

III. Invitation

A. God's Purpose

1. The aim of these prescriptions is not to heap judgment and guilt upon ourselves. Instead, their purpose is to bring the diseases of our souls out into the light of His Son where we can expose them to the healing grace of the Great Physician.
2. John 3:16-22 Expresses the truth of this spiritual principle beautifully
"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." NIV
3. Therefore, we are all faced with one critical question. How long has it been since you have been to the Physician for a thorough check up? How long has it been since the deepest and darkest recesses of your soul have been totally exposed to the light of God's inexpressible holiness?
4. God's prescription for purity is available to each and every one of us. Sometimes, the hardest step to take is to make an appointment.
5. Isn't it about time that we started reading the x-rays?