

Preposition Christmas "Under" God 12/15/2019

Recently I've been reflecting on a statement by the Christian writer, **Oswald Chambers**. He said. *"If you are going to be used by God, He will take you through a multitude of experiences that are not meant for you at all, they are meant to make you useful in His hands."*

Yesterday, during the men's breakfast, J.J. led us in a reflection and discussion of individuals who have most influenced our lives. Most of the men mentioned individuals who didn't influence them **from afar**, but rather influenced them by the fact that men spent time with them mentoring them and showing them what it looked like to live a God centered life. And the legacy of these individuals lives continues to live on in the individuals they influenced. And the challenge was left to each of us to consider who we are currently investing in.

And that takes me back to this Oswald Chambers quote. Life is frequently a series of defining events that present a choice before us in how we respond to those events. And we can either chose to respond in a way that glorifies God or in a way that focuses on our needs and hurts and pains.

I also found this quote fascinating as I applied it to the events surrounding Christ's birth and how God orchestrated events in a whole lot of people for His purposes not theirs.

- God prompted **Caesar Augustus** to issue a decree of the entire Roman world, which required individuals to travel to their family's hometown to register. The result of that being that it required Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem, which fulfilled the prophecy of Micah that predicted Jesus would be born there. Do you see how God uses even people who don't even know they are being used for His purposes to accomplish His purposes. Amazing!!!
- God enabled the elderly couple of **Elizabeth and Zechariah** to give birth to a son. But not just any son, but the forerunner to Jesus who would be used by God to prepare the people's hearts and minds to receive Jesus. But not only that, God knew that Mary would need someone to comfort and encourage her during her surprise pregnancy so He timed Elizabeth's pregnancy to slightly precede Mary's. And when the angel announced to Mary that she was going to become pregnant with Jesus, while she was still in shock the angel said to her: *"Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."* Luke 1:36-37 (NIV) Do you see how Elizabeth's pregnancy wasn't just for her alone but for the encouragement of Mary also?
- God spread the news of Jesus' birth through the very unlikely characters as the **dirty smelly shepherds**. For it says, that *"When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them."* Luke 2:17-18 (NIV) This was no doubt the greatest day of their lives and it would be for any of us who experienced it as well. And what's your response when you experience something that exciting? For most of us, we'd want to tell someone about it – and that's exactly what these shepherds did. And the shepherds didn't stop with spreading the word about Jesus. It also transformed their lives when they went back to their daily lives of tending sheep. For it says, *"The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."* Luke 2:20 (NIV)

I could go on to tell about Mary and Joseph and the wise men and Simeon and Anna about how God used their experiences to be used by Him for His purposes. But I think you get the point. God doesn't just **randomly do things** because He feels like doing things. He's the most intentional being

who's ever existed. He's always got a plan in mind and **His plan is always to use us for His purposes and glory.**

I think a great approach to this would be Mary's response to the angel's news that she was going to become pregnant with the Messiah. She simply said, "*I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said.*" (Luke 1:38)

Let's combine the quote from Oswald Chambers and Mary's response as we apply this principle to each of our lives.

If you are going to be used by God, He will take you through a multitude of experiences that are not meant for you at all, they are meant to make you useful in His hands."

"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."

- How many of you believe that God has a plan for your life right now?
- How many of you believe that God wants to use your current or past heartaches for His purposes?

Listen to the powerful words of Psalm 126 and consider how they might apply to your life right now.

"Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them." Psalms 126:5-6 (NIV)

Do you see that in the midst of your heartache, God wants to use your tears for His glory?

- Perhaps He wants to use your troubles to **reveal some sins in your life**. Or perhaps He wants to open up your eyes to the current status of your heart as you reflect on how you're reacting to the pain and heartache in your life right now. Because, crisis in our lives can tell us an awful lot about our hearts. If you react with anger and resentment and bitterness and retribution then God wants to strip you of that and heal your deep wounds and teach you how to live in His peace in the midst of personal hardship. You see the key is to commit to being a moldable servant in God's hands is to believe and trust God has a purpose and plan for your current struggles. But without looking to God and yielding to His transformative power, you'll likely end up bitter and heading down into a dark place. And as God transforms our hearts in the midst of a crisis, **He can use our mess to become our message** of His love and grace.
- Do you know what the most often repeated command is in the Bible? "*Fear not*" is repeated over **300 times** in the Bible. But we live in a society that is gripped by fear and anxiety. According to the American Institute of Stress,
 - 77 percent of the population experiences physical symptoms associated with stress on a regular basis,
 - 33 percent report living with extreme stress and
 - 48 percent say stress has a negative impact on their personal and professional lives.That means that a whole lot of us in this room are feeling the negative impact of stress. And what do we often do when we're feeling stressed? We focus on the cause of it and become even more stressed. Why not instead focus on God and allow the source of our stress to draw us closer to God who can give you a whole different perspective on your stress and strength in the midst of your stress. He can use your stress for His purposes.
- **Or maybe you're currently experiencing God's many blessings**. I want to challenge you to consider that God's blessing you so that you can be a blessing to others. It's unlikely that God's blessing you so that you can just live in that richness. He wants to use your blessings to demonstrate God's kindness and goodness to others.

1 John 3:17-20 (NIV) *If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*

This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

This is saying that if you've been blessed by God and yet there is an underlying dissatisfaction residing in your heart, it might be time to ask God, "is there something you're wanting me to do with these blessings that I'm not understanding?" Because God has a plan for blessing you – beyond just you. He blesses us so that we can show the love and generosity of God to others. **How are you going to do that this time of the year?** And it doesn't have to require a lot of money. Perhaps it's sending a card to someone to express how they've blessed your life or how you see God in and through them. What a huge blessing that could be to someone.

It continues to seem odd to me that while celebrating Christ's birth we spend huge amounts of money on buying gifts for other people and ignore Christ. I would encourage you to consider giving the **gift of being a servant to Jesus** this year by being His servant and proclaiming the goodness and generosity of love in allowing Him to speak His love into and through you.

So, our preposition this morning is "**under**". As you focus on the birth of Jesus, put yourself "under" the care and love and purposes of God. And believe God has a divine and effective purpose for your life situation right now. He wants to use your situation, whatever it might be, for the display of His glory to those around you.

Preposition Christmas
“ _____ ” God
12/15/2019

Oswald Chambers: *“If you are going to be used by God, He will take you through a multitude of experiences that are not meant for you at all, they are meant to make you _____ in His _____.”*

How was this principle in action surrounding the birth of Jesus?

How have you seen this principle demonstrated in your life?

What would be a great approach to God’s call on your life?

“I am the Lord’s _____ . May it be to me as you have said.”

- Do you believe God has a plan for your life right now?
- Do you believe that God wants to use your current or past heartaches for His purposes?

God ‘s Use of Your Life Circumstances:

- God can use your _____ to reveal sin in your life?
 - God can use your _____ to become your _____
- God can use your _____ to lead you to His peace.
- God can use your _____ to be a _____ to someone else
- In what other ways is God desiring to use your current circumstances for His glory?

Preposition Christmas
“ _____ ” God
12/15/2019

Oswald Chambers: *“If you are going to be used by God, He will take you through a multitude of experiences that are not meant for you at all, they are meant to make you _____ in His _____.”*

How was this principle in action surrounding the birth of Jesus?

How have you seen this principle demonstrated in your life?

What would be a great approach to God’s call on your life?

“I am the Lord’s _____ . May it be to me as you have said.”

- Do you believe God has a plan for your life right now?
- Do you believe that God wants to use your current or past heartaches for His purposes?

God ‘s Use of Your Life Circumstances:

- God can use your _____ to reveal sin in your life?
 - God can use your _____ to become your _____
- God can use your _____ to lead you to His peace.
- God can use your _____ to be a _____ to someone else
- In what other ways is God desiring to use your current circumstances for His glory?