

2/16/2020 - Misalignment

Scripture: Psalm 1 & Luke 6:17 – 26

Let me tell you about my first love – my one and only foreign sports car I ever owned! It was the first car that I purchased and it was a bad purchase! I bought a MGB hatchback sports car! It was an impulse buy. I was working at a Time Market to help pay off my college education and one day a man pulled up to get gas in the MGB. It was a beautiful car! It was British racing red with a sunroof and wired rimmed tires. It was love at first sight! When he finished getting gas, he pulled up to the store right in front of the big window that overlooked the parking lot and gas pumps. Then he came in to pay for his gas and I asked him about his car. We chatted for some time about the car. He shared how much he liked the car and we finally got to a point in our conversation when I ask him if he would sell the car. You see, I always wanted a foreign sports car. I wanted to sit low in a car with the gear shift stick in my right hand as I would go speeding down the road. I thought I would look COOL in a sports car and I did! He invite me to go out and sit in it. I got a fellow worker to cover for me and I made my way to the car. I climbed down into the driver's seat and (I have not had many loves in my life) I FELL IN LOVE! (Give me a moment to remember!) I asked him again if he would sell the car and he said \$2,000 and I said without hesitation - SOLD! But I did not research the cost of owning and maintaining a foreign sports car. It was a money pit! It sucked my finances dry! One such case was I had to buy new tires for my MGB. The car was so misaligned when I bought it that when it reached 60 mph as I often did, it would start thumping and the steering wheel would vibrate severely. It was misaligned – it needed realignment and I did do that at a high cost to me!

Twice since completing this message I have had situations where misalignment came up:

First when I went to print this message, I had another situation of realignment. I hit print on my computer and immediately a message came up on the screen telling me that my black ink cartridge was very low, so I took out our spare black ink cartridge and snapped out the old ink cartridge and snapped in the new black ink cartridge into my printer and reclosed the panel. I hit print again and a message came up on the screen about the printer doing an alignment page. For me to print a document I received this message – Wait for the alignment to be completed. If I did not wait, my printed item would be misaligned.

Secondly, here at the church when our main double doors to the church would not lock close. They were out of alignment and the locking mechanism would close! On Tuesday, Sharon and I could not get the doors to lock. Neither of our keys would work. We tried to pull on this door or push on that door, so finally I got the lock to work from the inside of the church and I exited through the front door. I contacted our resident engineer – Glenn. He came into the church and realigned our main doors. Glenn, would you explain your engineer feat?

Fun how God speaks to us many different ways!

Wouldn't it be nice if the minute a person became a new Christian and accepted Christ, he or she would automatically be aligned the right way? God did leave us a plan to follow for Christian living. If we read and study to Word of God, we will learn the perfect plan for us and know the way to go. Before accepting Christ, we are in misalignment; after accepting Christ, we are in alignment with God. God has not left us alone to flounder helplessly, but God has left us with an instruction book full of life and direction.

To live righteously is to simply live in right alignment with God and God's plan. If your car's wheels are misaligned, it can come with major problems for other parts of the car like the brakes or the wheel bearings. This imbalance or misalignment can adversely affect the car's rate of speed, braking capacity, and gas mileage.

This is likewise true in our spiritual life. We are slow in getting where we are destined to go because we are not properly aligned. We are not maximizing our time, talent, and treasures for the glory of God.

The modern church is struggling with misalignment. The old church model is not working in modern times. Church use to hold Sundays as their day. Sundays were the church's day. Now every group, business, or activity has broken into the model of Church & Sunday. We are misaligned!

In order to resolve that we will be blessed; in order to solve our misalignment, there are people we need to watch out for. Psalm 1 points out three specific types of persons and personalities to watch out for in order to be blessed by God and to live in alignment with God. God's word says that blessed people avoid those who are ungodly. That is to say, persons and personalities who lack moral and ethical integrity. Very wise words in this time of great division in our country and world. God will bless the obedient and the faithful, so we must avoid those who serve themselves because they can become a stumbling block for us.

Secondly, if you are resolved to be blessed, then there are some priorities you need to establish. Verse 2 in Psalm 1 tells us that a person who is blessed is so because God centers their joy and desires on the things and ways as prescribed and dictated by God. If you take on these joys and desires, your misalignment will become aligned with God! If you make God your priorities, then your priorities will become God's priorities. If you desire the Lord, you will be blessed!

Finally, you must be planted. Planted means here – firmly positioned, settled, and established. We must be planted in order to grow! We must reflect on where we are planted and who planted us there. If where you were planted is distant from God, the things of God, and the people of God; then you need to reflect on where you are planted because you are possibly planted in some unfertile place with decaying and demonic people. We must rather be planted in God's word and work through our worship and relationship with God. Do not wait until tomorrow to begin to rejoice, to praise, and to celebrate. Resolve to be blessed now and forever!

The text from the Gospel of Luke is a challenging text. Luke's text is commonly referred to as the 'Beatitudes'. It points to the manifestation of God in and across our lived experiences. It is challenging because it requires us to see God in places and in ways that are against the world's priorities and perspectives. As Christians, we are called to use a formula that is the inverse of societal norms. The world only sees blessings in the signs and wonders that are principally material in nature, ornate by design, signified by status, and socially accepted or approved.

However, God's priorities do not align with the world. God's priorities are misaligned with the worlds – that is the challenge! God's blessing is GRACE! God's blessing is operating and living in the preferences and expectations of God. God blesses those whom society marginalizes. Christian theology is of liberation, not exclusion. Its task should be concerned with expressing the meaning of liberation so that those who are laboring under enslaving powers will see liberation in Christ. Our God is the God of the oppressed. Through Christ, we are liberated to free the captive, heal the sick, empower the poor and weak, uplift the downtrodden, and radically reform and transform the political, social, and economic systems of this world.

God can and will show up in our world in real, meaningful, and necessary ways. We ought to see God's evidence in our lives. God's evidence is in tangible and intangible forms within our lives. Christians need to make their faith real in their daily lives. Ultimately, if we follow God's call, we will create conflict in the world around us. Let me repeat that – if you follow God's call, you will create conflict in the world around you! Being a Christian, a follower of Christ, is a hard thing but the rewards are eternal.

Society seeks to reinforce its own values. Making God's values a priority in our lives, will make us antagonistic to the world. But through God's grace, we are blessed even in our discomfort. We are blessed through entering into a new way of being in which we reject the rubric that society attempts to use to measure our lives. I truly wish I was telling you that if you follow Jesus, your life will be a rose garden but like the song – Jesus never promised us a rose garden but Jesus does promise us an eternal life.

Let us pray:

God of life, help us to be faithful in the reading of your word. God of life anew, help us to live a life in alignment with your will. Lord, make us an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, let us forgive; where there is doubt, let there be faith; where there is despair, let us show hope; where there is darkness, let us bring light; and where there is sadness, let us bring joy.

O Divine Master, grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; not to be understood but to understand; and not to be loved but to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are given eternal life. AMEN.