

Radiant Church, July 19, 2020
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We Believe God Pursues

Jeremiah 29:11-13 *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.*

God already has good plans for us
Then, we will seek Him; and He will be found by us

But we don't start out looking for God. We don't start out pursuing after God

Genesis 3:8 *And they [Adam and Eve] heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God.*

Our sin convinces us to run away and hide out from God

Genesis 3:9 *But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"*

This is perhaps the first missionary effort - God the Creator pursuing His lost creatures

God pursues us with covenantal love

What is a covenant?

An arrangement between two parties involving obligations for one or both of the parties

Adam - Satan (sin) will "bruise you heel," while you (ultimately Jesus) will "bruise Satan's head"

Preceded by Adam's sin

Initiated by God, royal grant, one-way, unconditional, everlasting

Sign? Animal skins provided as covering, food and shelter they can find

Noah (Genesis 8) - earth will never be flooded again. The earth will be preserved as the stage for the reconciliation of all things

Preceded by the destruction caused by the worldwide flood

Initiated by God, royal grant, one-way, unconditional, everlasting

Sign? Rainbow

Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) - Descendants favored and blessed, in order to be a blessing to the world.

Preceded by the Tower of Babel

Initiated by God, royal grant, one-way, unconditional, everlasting

Sign? Circumcision

Moses (Exodus 19:5-8) - the Law given, to make God's chosen people distinctive. However, while the Law was to teach righteous standards, it really showed how sin leaves us short of an earned relationship with God

Preceded by the birth of Israel as a nation after having left Egypt

Initiated by God, "Suzerain-Vassal Treaty," two-way, conditional, temporary
Sign? Sabbath

David (2 Samuel 7:11-16) - Secures a Son from David's lineage to sit on the Throne of God's Kingdom and reign forever.

Preceded by the chaotic time of the Judges, and before the time after Solomon

Initiated by God, royal grant, one-way, unconditional, everlasting
Sign? The birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus

Messiah **Hebrews 10:15-18** *And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,' then he adds, 'I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.' Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.*

How?

Hebrews 10:9b-13 *He does away with the first [covenant] in order to establish the second [covenant.] And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet [finally fulfilling God's covenant promise to Adam.]*

Replaces old covenant. Secures salvation, a new heart and forgiveness for all of God's people. Includes a new promised land (new heavens and new earth) and peaceful eternity with God.

Initiated by God, royal grant, one-way, unconditional, everlasting

Sign? The bread and the cup of communion

Jesus told parables about lost sheep, and lost coins, how the owner goes looking God has always pursued His own. God has always initiated

God makes His covenant promises, even though we don't deserve any of it

John 6:44 *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.*

Jesus wants us to understand the heart of God

Jesus's mission on earth was to "seek and save that which is lost (Luke 19:10)

We pursue love, money, fame and relationships because they are important to us. God pursues us because we are important to Him; He created in His own image.

God's passionate pursuit of us involved, even required sending His beloved Son, Jesus, to die in our place

John 3:17 *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

Because we could not reach Him through our own efforts, God reached down to us

To the people of Israel, God said in **Isaiah 65:1-2** *I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am,' to a nation that was not called by my name. I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices.*

Jesus walked among the people He loved, and He mourned their spiritual stubbornness.

Matthew 23:37 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you are not willing!*

They had failed to keep their end of God's covenant in Moses's time

God had come in the flesh to pursue those He'd created, but they rejected Him

John 1:11 *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*

But, like God's covenant with Abraham, these were the people who were chosen to be Exhibit A of what it looked like to be in a covenant relationship with God to the world. And they chose not to. Like Adam and Eve, they ran from God.

But God's message of redemption through Jesus has gone out and been made available to the whole world; always God's plan

John 1:12-13 *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or the will of the flesh nor of the will of men, but of God.*

God has thrown open the doors of salvation, and whoever is willing may come

Romans 1:16-17 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God was revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'*

Through the obedience of the Church, Jesus has continued to pursue men and women of every era, every nation, tribe and language.

It is our joy to tell other people that God is pursuing a relationship with them, just as He has with us!

A Christian may have moments when they feel no one loves them.

But our faith reminds us that we are deeply loved by our God who came to us to pay the deep price, so we could also love Him back.

There is no greater honor in the universe than being the objects of the almighty God's pursuit.