

February 17, 2013 - Renewed by God

We are going to have a little history lesson this morning, I know you are all excited. Back in 1965, a miraculous mixture of water, sodium, sugar and potassium phosphate and lemon juice was concocted by a team of researchers at the University of Florida College of Medicine. It was created at the request of the football coach at the University of Florida. His name was Ray Graves, to aid the athletes by acting as a hydrating agent for them to replace lost body fluids at the end of the game when they were playing in the hot muggy weather, down in Florida. The team started making use of this beverage during their practices and during their games. They gave full credit and actually the other team's coach gave credit to this little drink, to their success in the 1967 Orange Bowl in which they were victorious over the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets. They said "the reason we won" and the other team's coach said "the reason they won And we didn't is because they had this little drink that was giving them all their energy and stuff back, while the game was going on". Now, what was this mysterious beverage that aided the Florida Gators to football supremacy? Gatoraid! That's right. Since 1967 Gatoraid has been bought and sold a couple of times. It's been patented. New flavours have come out. And in 2011, Gatoraid netted a little over eight billion dollars for the Pepsi Company. That's a long, long, ways it has come since then. Somewhere in the mid-80's as far as I can tell, Gatoraid took refreshing to a whole new level when NFL teams decided that they would invent a tradition known as the Gatoraid shower, in which they would take a big cooler of the stuff and dump it on their head coach after a big win. Now if you look at his face, he doesn't look very refreshed to me, and the guy behind him has an even better expression, if you look at him.

That's not my idea of refreshment, I don't know if it's yours, if it is we can go out back in the parking lot after service and try it out. That's not my idea of refreshment. My idea of refreshment looks quite different than something like that. My idea of refreshment is: solitude; going out somewhere probably in nature or at a lake or in the woods, just sitting in the peace and the quiet and just kind of being there.

Another idea of refreshment, to me, is a hot tub. I love a hot tub you can go sit in there and its warm and there's water around and they've got those little jets that kind of massage you. My parents-in-law used to have a hot tub at their house so I loved to go and visit my in-laws because they had the hot tub and I would go out there. I actually had to curb my hot-tubbing because my in-laws thought I didn't like them because I kept running out of the house to go to the hot tub every time I was there. And I said "no, no, it's nothing personal, I just love the hot tub" I just feel so relaxed and soothed when I sit in there.

Another thing that refreshes me, actually, is creating. Whenever I'm doing something creative that refreshes me. Whether its writing something or doing something artistic or building something or doing something on the computer. Anytime I'm doing something creative, that refreshes me. Now, I know that the things that refresh me are not the things that refresh you, at least not all of them and so I try to think what are some other things that

people might find refreshing? And I know that there are some of you here who like, a good party is refreshing to you. You have lots of people and lots of food and lots of activity and for some of you, that's really refreshing to you. It energizes you and it kind of fills you up. For other people, work is refreshing. For some of you, I know, work is the opposite of refreshing and I appreciate that, but for some people, work is refreshing because they're doing what they love and when they go there they just feel energized and they feel positive and they feel like they are doing what they were meant to do and that's refreshing to them.

For some of you, exercise is refreshment. Whether it's to go jog or to go spinning, whatever is the latest exercise thing is you go do that and you go to the gym and when you come out of there you just feel refreshed and you feel revitalized and you feel energized and that is refreshing to you. We all have our different things that are refreshing and we all look for things that are refreshing to us. I think the reason that we all look for things in our lives that can be refreshing to us, is because at times we all tend to feel just a little bit weary now and then, don't we?

Max Lucado tells a story about a man named Joseph Crater. Here is what Max writes about Joseph Crater:

“In August of 1930, 45 year old Joseph Crater waved goodbye to friends after an evening meal in a New York restaurant; flagged down a taxi and rode off. He had stated earlier that he was planning to attend a Broadway show. He was never seen or heard from again. Fifty years of research has offered countless theories but no conclusions. Since Crater was a successful New York Supreme Court Judge, many have suspected murder but as a solid lead has never been found, other options have been presented: Kidnapping; mafia involvement; even suicide. A search of his apartment revealed one clue. It was a note attached to a cheque and both were left for his wife. The cheque was a sizeable amount and the note simply read: “I am very weary, Love, Joe.”

The note could have been nothing more than a thought at the end of a hard day or it could have meant a great deal more. The epitaph of a despairing man. Weariness is tough. And I don't mean physical weariness that comes from mowing the lawn or mental weariness that follows a hard day making decisions or thinking. No, weariness that comes just before you give up. That feeling of honest desperation. It's that stage in life where motivation disappears and the result is weariness.

Only one man in history has claimed to have the answer for it. He stands before all the Joseph Crater's of the World with the same promise.

“Come to me all of you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yolk upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yolk is easy and my burden is light.” Matt. 11:28-30.

Doesn't that sound good to you. David paints a glorious picture of what this kind of rest looks for in the passage that Brad read for us earlier. I'm going to read it again and as we read through it I want you to make note of the refreshing images that David gives us as he talks about his relationship with God. Psalms 23:1-6:

“The Lord is my Shepherd I have all that I need. He lets me rest in the green meadows. He leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along the right paths bringing honour to His name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honour me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely Your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life and I will live in the House of the Lord forever.”

You see, the problem with all of the kinds of refreshing that I seek after is that they are all just temporary. Eventually you've got to get out of the hot tub. Eventually the party is over and everyone goes home. Eventually the workout buzz that you get from your exercise wears off. You see, refreshing fades. Last week we talked about transformation and we talked about how God uses our worship to transform us. We read passages like 2Cor. 3:18 that says:

“So all of us have had the veil removed and can see and reflect the glory of the Lord and the Lord whose spirit makes us more and more like Him, as we are transformed into His glorious image.”

But what we failed to say last week, is that we're not transformed into something new or into something different, we are actually being renewed, we're being renewed again, we're being restored to our original beauty. Because if you remember way back in the beginning of Genesis, Chapter 1, this is how God views his creation of man. He says in Gen. 1:27:

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female, He created them.”

And so, what Paul is saying is that as we follow Christ we are just being transformed back into what we were meant to be right from the very beginning. It's like a masterpiece that has been damaged over time by maybe water or smoke or dirt and grime or mistreatment and so the picture is skewed and it's blurred and it's just a shadow of what it once was but then, someone comes along and it's carefully and meticulously restored to it's original beauty. Sometimes the process is imperceptible but the end result is unmistakable. And what God offers us is a better kind of refreshment. Because God's refreshment is renewal; it's restoration; it's putting all the broken pieces back together; it's removing the grit and grime; it's undoing the effects of time and the mistakes of the past and it's making us more and more as we were originally designed to be. Which is why Paul continues to write in 2Cor. And says this in Chapter 4:16-18:

“Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

And it is refreshing to become what we were made to be. To function as we were made to function. To be converted back to our original design as God foresaw us to be. To recapture the beauty that God originally gave us. And sometimes that process is not so visible to us but it is ongoing and it is eternal.

Which brings us to Worship Reality #5. Worship brings Renewal. And as you look at worship reality #5, I want to connect some of the dots for you from where we’ve been the last several weeks because, I think, worship brings renewal is in many ways the culmination of where we’ve been going this last five weeks. So follow me if you would through the last several weeks of our series and the realities that we’ve looked at previously.

Worship Reality #2. Worship inspires Awe. And we said that in worship we see who God really is and we understand what God has really done and that image of who God really is, is just astounding to us because we see His holiness and we see His glory and we see His majesty and we are refreshed by rediscovering who God is because, understanding who God is, is what we were made to do from the beginning.

Reality #3, says Worship is Expression. It is a passionate expression in response to the awe and the majesty of God. We are compelled to respond with expressive passion proportionate to who God is and what God has done. And we are refreshed by rediscovering our own place in God’s eyes. Who we are, not in the eyes of the World and not our own eyes but we understand who we are in relation to who God is.

Last week, we said Worship is Formative. Worship is regular and repetitive affirmation of God’s place as the most important thing in our life and intentionally making choices based on that truth. Shape our heart and our mind and we are refreshed and we are repaired and we are renewed and we are restored by God to our original design and beauty.

Which brings us to Reality #1. Worship Creates Community. Because God has seen fit to surround us by a family, by a community of people who are all going through that same process, who are all kind of discovering those same realities; who are all having different visions of the majesty and awesomeness of God; who are all having different experiences in life that reinforce all of these things and He says: “I’m going to put you all together so that you can refresh one another. So that I can refresh each of you through each other as a family as a group, as a community. We are refreshed by each other because of our common faith and struggle and journeys.

Now, refreshment is something that is much, much, better experienced than explained. And so, this morning I'm going to ask your participation in a little experiment. What we are going to do for the rest of our sermon time, is we are going to split up and I'm going to give you three different areas which you can go to in our building. The first area is what we call "The Prayer Area" and it's just right through those doors on the left. And if you want to take some time and be refreshed in prayer; if you want to spend some time praying with God; if you want someone praying with you about something that's going on in your life, then please, in a few moments when we tell you, drift over to the prayer area and spend some time in there being refreshed there.

The second area is in our Fireside Room which is just out in the lobby and down the hall a little bit. That is the "quiet" area. And there are some of you here who need to be refreshed by a little bit of quiet. You need a place to have some quiet reflection or maybe do some reading in God's word, or maybe you just need a little peace. I know, there are some of you here who would give anything for ten minutes of peace and quiet. This is your opportunity to be refreshed in our quiet space.

This area in here, in our auditorium is what we are going to call "Our encouragement area". Here's what I want you to do. If you don't go to the prayer area or you don't go to the quiet area, I want you to stay in here and here's the rules for the encouragement area. #1. If you are feeling refreshed already, I want you to seek out someone that you think might need a little refreshing and go and engage in a conversation with them. Rule #2. If someone comes up to talk to you, don't assume it's because they think you are in really bad shape, Okay? That's not necessarily what's going on, Okay? Rule #3. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to visit about things that matter. We kind of slip into things about talking about the Riders or the Blades or talking about politics or the weather. Try and avoid those things. Talk about real things, life things. How is it going? How are you doing? How is your family? Those type of conversations. Those are what we want to have. Next Rule. Be encouraging to one another, don't try and fix each other, be encouraging to one another as you talk. Don't be afraid to pray with each other as your conversation winds down. Then the final rule is: If at all possible, I would like everyone to stay in one of the rooms I mentioned for the next ten or fifteen minutes as we have this time together. Please don't go out wandering the halls or anything like that, kids are still in class. So that's what we would like you to do. At the end of the time, I will come to both the quiet room and the prayer room and say "Okay, our time is about up, we're going to have communion in about one minute. You can decide if you want to have communion here or we will bring a tray to each one of those rooms and you can have communion in those rooms if you prefer to do that.

Before I dismiss you to do that, I'm going to ask Craig to come and lead us in a prayer and then you will be dismissed to go to the area that will bring you the most refreshing, this morning.