

sermon study guide

Speaker: Ron Pearce

Date: October 19 / 20, 2019

Sermon Title: Global Ministries Weekend

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. What is the most difficult physical or mental task you ever accomplished (e.g. climbing a mountain, completing a degree, running a marathon, etc.)?
2. In the message, Ron Pearce from Empower Ministries International shared a lot of stories that were very moving. What story caught your attention and why?

PURSUE GOD: Time that is devoted to the Word of God

Read Romans 8:35-39

1. How can Christians be deemed 'more than conquerors' while at the same time experiencing persecution/oppression/hardship?
2. In the message, Ron talked about what we in the West call the 'persecuted' church. He said churches around the world would rather be known as the 'persevering' church. Why do you think they prefer 'persevering' to 'persecuted'? Why is this concept important?

PURSUE MISSION: Seek to be the community of God's people in your community

1. How should we pray for the persevering church? Should we focus more on praying for release from hardship/persecution, or for the strength to persevere and see the Lord's will be done through difficult circumstances?
2. From this weekend's service and the stories that were shared, what is God saying to you about the persevering church? How can you pray more focused prayers? Is God prompting you to help in some way?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Pastor Brad shared a story about how yellow trucks remind him to pray. What is your yellow truck? What will you put into your life to remind you to pray? Do you know of someone in the persevering church who would be grateful for your prayers?

THE WORD (NIV)

Romans 8:35-39

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

sermon study summary

Global Ministries Weekend

The world is becoming more and more anti-Christian; believers in many countries have lost the freedom to worship God freely and are under all kinds of pressures, troubles, and persecution. Christians take great care to meet together. Believers often lose their jobs. Their families go hungry or become ill, and they become destitute. Many, especially leaders, are threatened with imprisonment and/or death.

Romans 8:35-39 describes the situation of the persecuted church. But Paul stated that no earthly or evil power can separate believers from the love of Christ, who gives them victory. This victory under pressure and persecution has led to increased, even exponential growth in the number of believers, such as what we read in the Book of Acts.

In the West we use the term “persecution” to talk about the difficulties and pressures such believers experience in many of the “hotspots” of the world. National churches prefer instead to use the word “persevering”. **What does persevering mean?** The dictionary defines it as: to continue steadfastly, to persist and not give up in the face of difficulty even with little or no prospect of success. To keep on until the end.

Ron Pearce gave stories of several “hotspots” of the world, the growth of the Christian church and how believers are persevering. Despite trying to demolish the church by exacting huge penalties such as imprisonment for proclaiming the gospel, the church is increasing at an incredible rate in some countries. God gives believers courage to trust Jesus at every turn, to look through their suffering and beyond. The persevering church keeps their eyes on eternity and know others are lost without Jesus. And so they continue to share Jesus and pursue their vision of reaching their communities and countries for Christ.

They have seen in others a great hunger for God, truth and peace. In many places, God gives dreams and visions of Himself to not-yet believers. These people see a bright light, and a Man in white speaks to them. Somehow they know it is Jesus. They are amazed that God would seek them out and find them. Others connect with Christianity online where they see testimonies of people who come to Jesus.

Believers know God is powerful—more powerful than local gods or great religions. For example, witchdoctors cannot heal someone who is ill. Believers pray, and God heals, often immediately. Those who are healed see God’s power and often come to know Jesus. God at times surrounds believers with his protection. For example, many times imprisoned believers/leaders are released from prison. But if they are not released, they endure with God’s strength and presence, and many come to Christ in prison.

There are great needs which Empower Ministries International is seeking to meet. This organization works with others such as the Bible Society to produce and distribute much-needed Bibles to believers. Empower Ministries International also provides training for leaders and young pastors in Biblical knowledge and spiritual principles so that they can disciple believers. These pastors also receive training in vocational /employability skills so that they can be self-supporting.

In light of all the persecution around the world and the needs of believers, we at Centre Street Church are challenged to surround the persevering church of Christ in prayer. Pastor Brad told of how seeing a yellow truck reminds him to give back to the Lord what God has given to him. He asked us, “What is your ‘yellow truck’ to remind you to pray for the persevering church?”