

"Chiseled"

I may as well go ahead and get your disappointment over with. I am sure that when you saw the title of this sermon that you thought I was going to finally share my secrets for getting my physique. But sadly, that will have to wait for another time, We are going to talk about a different kind of chiseled today. Let me point is in a different direction as difficult and disappointing as that seems.

Have you ever been to Mr Rushmore? **PHOTO 1**

I have to admit, I didn't think I would be that impressed, but it was really impressive Those faces are big...really big.

Each face is carved out of solid granite. Do you know that 90% of the granite was removed with dynamite?

14 years...400 workers and each day they had to go up 506 steps just to get to work.

The monument is 60 foot (18 m) high. Each of the President's heads are the height of a six-story building, their eyes are 11 ft across, their noses are 20 ft long and their mouths 18 ft wide.

When you see them...each face seems so focused...so determined. **PHOTO 2** They seem to be gazing off into their future destiny. As if whatever they were experiencing in the moment was insignificant compared to what their life was really about.

Their faces remind me of Jesus. Well of a moment really....a moment that was part of an overall mission to save all of us...A moment when the story of Jesus turns toward the Cross...A moment where the Easter Story starts to get very real for Jesus.

Luke 9:51 (ESV) 51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up,

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to be Taken up. • He would be taken up to the higher-elevation city of Jerusalem • He would be Taken up on a cross • He would be Taken up to heaven i

Notice something else very interesting....Luke does not tell us that Jesus is going to Jerusalem...Doesn't tell us that Jesus is going to the cross....or that He is going up to Heaven.

He is to be taken up. This involves others. Yes He is willfully going...but He is being taken to these places. Jesus is being served up by the people....they will crucify Him...but then He will be taken up to Heaven by God.

You read this and you many think...Yes Man is going to take Jesus to Jerusalem...to the Cross....but that is actually not true.

Everything that happens to Jesus...occurs...because the Father took Him there. It is the Father who is orchestrating these events on earth. It is the Father who is redeeming man to Himself. It is the Father who requires the just punishment for our sins....It is the Father who will receiving the offering of Jesus as the Lamb of God...IT is the Father who will allow every discussion...every false claim....every lash with the whip....every thorn in the crown...every taunt from the crowd....every torturous step carrying the cross...every nail...the spear in the side...These things occur for only one reason and one reason only. The Father commanded it, ordained it and allowed it to happen. And Hold on to your seat....It pleased Him to do it.

Isaiah 53:10 (NASB95) 10 But the Lord was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.

Jesus was going to be taken up...to Jerusalem...to the Cross and to Heaven...but make no mistake about it...everything that happened to Jesus occurred because God allowed it, ordained it, and orchestrated it.

The horrible events of passion week....were held under the watchful and loving eye of God. He could have stopped it but He didn't....He could have reduced the suffering...but He didn't...He could have reduced the whipping but He didn't. He could have made Jesus die quicker on the cross...but He didn't.

You may be asking yourself...What Kind of Sick God gets pleasure out of passion week?

Jesus is suffering.....and the Father enjoyed it....that is just wrong.

Do you see how Satan has us inserting things that are not in Scripture? God never said He enjoyed it in the moment...The Word says that it pleased Him.

This is where our human minds often misunderstand God. We are locked into a time warp. All we tend to see is the moment that we are in right now.

We wake up each day and we sort of check to see how things are going...well specifically..going for us and those we love.

We go from moment to moment each day and we decide if things are good or bad. We constantly judge the moment that we are in and rarely ever see our lives...our moments...as part of a much bigger picture.

So right now we are dealing with Covid-19. People are in lock down. Others who I know and care for have the disease. Humans look at the news to get a sense of how things are going. We live our lives moving from one uncertainty to the next...one reason to worry to the next...We have to be forced to see our lives outside of our recent moments.

It happens when we attend a funeral. When someone we love unexpectedly or even expectedly dies. When something bigger than us, threatens us, and wakes us up out of our moment to moment me first selfish existence.

We live in such an individualistic society that we rarely see life the way God does. We rarely see ourselves as part of a bigger picture. We make our lives about us...our moments have to work for us...we look from moment to moment and judge God and our world as if that is all that there is.

It pleased the Father to send Jesus to the cross. He didn't enjoy it...wasn't eating popcorn and watching it...In the moment He was devastated. His heart breaking as the Father when Jesus called out Father....why have you forsaken me?

Jesus...on the cross....calling out...in the moment...Why have you forsaken me? Where have you gone? Why do you not seem to be in this moment with me?

Have you ever been there?

In a moment and wondering where God has gone?

Maybe you are there right now. Maybe you are really freaking out about this whole Covid Virus pandemic. You see people getting the disease and dying....you see people fighting over toilet paper...you see people afraid to engage with one another....

And in the moment you wonder where God went...and why God would allow such a horrible thing to happen to you and those you love in this moment. If God truly cared..you think without saying aloud....he would fix this. He would make me feel better in this moment. God owes it to me to make me feel safe...in every moment that I live.

Have you met people who never seem to plan....never seem to have any overall structure to their lives..they just go from one moment to the next...no real plan...no real goals...just going through life....without any real purpose?...Do you know what we call those people?...Free Spirits.

Do you know where that term comes from? Free Spirits? Well it has changed over the years. We see that term today and we think how great they are footloose and fancy free...not a care in the world...just living life...moment to moment...they are free spirited.

I read once that the term Free Spirit was used in the second and third century churches. The original word actually mean void...without...not having....People who didn't know God were called Free OF THE SPIRIT. I could not find the source again but believe it to be true.

The early church fathers, used the term Free of The Spirit to speak of those who rejected Jesus as their Lord. They lived their lives without the Spirit of God....no overarching purpose...no higher calling...not aligned with God's plan for their lives. Their lives were detached from anything God was doing in the world.

People who live free of the Spirit...only see their lives and what God is doing....right now. They have no concept of their higher calling....their sacrificial calling and their role in God's greater plan. It pleased God to send Jesus to the cross because God is not limited to a moment. God never promised us a life full of wrinkle free moments. In fact, His promise was long term.

Romans 8:26 (ESV) 26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Romans 8:28 (ESV) 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Notice something here. God doesn't say that for those he loves all of our moments will be good. In fact, He promised us the opposite.

John 16:33 (ESV) 33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

As believers, we are going to have some really difficult moments....but never bad ones. Let me repeat that...in your life as a follower of Christ, you will have some really difficult moments but never bad ones.

Every moment in your life and in my life has been allowed by the Father. He has the power to stop it, He knows it is happening, and yet He has allowed it. Didn't always cause it, but allows it for His purposes.

And just as it pleased Him to send Jesus to the cross....it pleases Him to allow us to go through trials, disease, sickness, the flu, Covid-19 viruses and yes even suffering and death. If God has allowed something to occur....in His sovereign will....there is something about it that advances His plans for mankind. The moments may seem difficult, but for believers they are never bad. Why? because our lives are about much more than what is happening in this moment or any moment.

Paul tells us in this Romans passage that we are going to have moments...moments so difficult...that we will have no words....just groans....

But then he says...that we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Why? Paul tells us....

Romans 8:29–30 (ESV) 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

So you see it? This is a promise only to believers. All things work for good for those who KNOW THE LORD. If you don't know the Lord things never work out for you. You may have some great moments...but long term you are doomed.

Why are we assured that we will have difficult times but never bad times? Because God knows us....God is conforming us into the image of His Son. Those He knows...He called....He justified...and he Glorified.

No matter how difficult our moments may seem....the greater truth of the lives of believers is that every moment we live is allowed by God and used by God to transform us into the image of Christ.

Covid 19 is a blessing that God has allowed into our lives to reveal the strength of our foundation...to allow us to see our faith in Him in action....and to shape us to be just like Christ.

More importantly....and this one you may really need to hold on to your seats for....

If God has allowed it into our lives...it is not only His will...but it is the very best thing that can happen to us...because God doesn't do second best.

Of all the options available to God for our world right now....Covid 19 is best. IF you believe as I do...that God can do anything...is not limited in any way...and that everything He allows is best for those He loves...then whatever event has entered into your moment....God through perfect God first.

Covid-19 is the best virus...the best worldwide event.. for this moment in human history to bring about in the World what God desires for those He loves. We can label the moment as good or bad from our human view..but God would call it necessary in order to accomplish His overall mission on earth.

Jesus was incredible at living His life as a human from one moment to the next. He was always engaged in what the Spirit of God was doing around Him and through Him in each moment. But while He lived completely in the moment...He always was aware that these moments were simply necessary events to bring about the Father's greater will and plan for man..

God is not limited by time...or how you feel about the moments in your life. He is using whatever is necessary to shape His followers into the image of Christ and to bring about His sovereign will regarding Salvation and the judgment of Mankind.

Did you ever have to hold your children as they pleaded with you because they didn't want a shot or treatment that will in the long run save their lives? Have you ever had to look into their eyes and tell them that while the moment is tough, painful and seems unfair....the benefit to come is so great that love demands that they endure the moment?

Our Heavenly Father has sent us through many moments that are necessary. We plead for them to go away, but He in love tells us it is not only good...but the very best way to bring about His will in your life and on earth.

We wiggle and scream and plead with God to take away Covid 19 but God tells us...this too is necessary. And for those who love me...it will be ok. We just have to go through this.

But this is what I love about God. He tells us the same thing we tell our children. I will be right here with you. I will not leave you. No matter what you have to go through, no matter how painful, fearful, dark, uncertain...I will always be right here with you. Yes you may get sick. Yes you may die...But you will never spend a moment...in the moment...alone. I will always be with you. I am Immanuel...God with us...and for those who trust in Jesus you will never have to utter the words Jesus cried out....My God My God why have you forsaken me? Jesus took your place...so I can make this promise to you.

Deuteronomy 31:6 (ESV) 6 Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."

I love that God tells us what is going to happen before it happens. That He tells us these moments are necessary but not to worry.

Matthew 24:7-8 (ESV) 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

Ok it is getting serious now...Last week there was an Earthquake in TEXAS! 5.1!

Hey Frank...Hey Remnant....There will be famines...They are just the beginning of what is happening...They not labor pains...they are just the beginning of birth pains....

Matthew 24:6 (ESV) 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.

See that you are not alarmed....See that you are not alarmed....

And then I love this verse...It is the most loving verse...

Matthew 24:25 (ESV) 25 See, I have told you beforehand.

I love the way Peter so bluntly speaks to us....

1 Peter 4:12-13 (ESV) 12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

Many Christians right now are acting as if something strange were happening to them. And yet God told us this would happen. To be ready for it. To embrace it.

Covid 19 is nothing compared to what is going to follow....nothing. If you are afraid now...you better get back into the promises of God's word and find His peace and His resolve because we are all going to need it.

Matthew 24:21–22 (ESV) 21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. 22 And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

There is only one way to prepare yourself for what is coming...and no it is not stocking up on toilet paper. When people see what is to come...toilet paper will not help.

How do we prep for God's Plans? By hunkering down in His Word. By binging on God's presence...By turning off the TV, social media, and all of the pundits who don't know what is going to happen and then quarantine yourself by abiding in the Only One who does.

This is the verse that I go to when I am struggling in the moment.

Psalm 119:105 (ESV) 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

God's word is a lamp to my feet...it is enough to get me through the next step...the next moment...When I am struggling...when I begin to worry or get fearful...I binge of God's Word...and every time...every time...I have found a verse to give me enough peace to take the next step...His word is a lamp unto my feet.

But Oh MY GOD...His word is a light to my path. It is in His word that I understand the path that I am on. Not the next step...The path...the Purpose...the reason...The overall greater plan that God has for my life that is so beyond any moment that it dwarfs whatever is happening in any moment.

His word....LIGHTS UP my path. It reveals a dim light to my moment but a floodlight to my path...my purpose...my mission...my life.

When we come out of Scripture having abiding in Christ....we glow spiritually like Moses glowed physically...because we have been in the presence of God.

We come out of our time abiding in Christ not really caring about the moment and lit up literally about the path.

Like David we can say...I will fear no evil for though art with me.

When God's people...glowing from abiding in God's Word go out into the trials and tribulations facing the world...they bring light into darkness...and are willing to do anything to allow God to use their lives to accomplish His mission on earth.

Their resolve is intense. Have you ever seen someone determined to do exactly what God has instructed, commanded and empowered them to do?

Luke tried to describe it to us...

Luke 9:51 (ESV) 51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

He set His face....To Go. The Father had a plan that must be accomplished. He would lead Jesus in the Spirit to Jerusalem, to suffer, to the cross, to the grave, and to the throne...The moments would be horrible...the mission would be glorious.

Jesus set His face...the Greek Term here refers to one who is chiseled. One who is unmoving, unwavering, undaunted, unrelenting, completely focused...And Jesus' face was chisled like flint to go to Jerusalem and accomplish all that the Father had willed for His life.

Look at the Words of the Messiah Jesus through the Prophet Isaiah....hundreds of years before the cross.

Isaiah 50:6–9 (ESV) 6 I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. 7 But the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. 8 He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. 9 Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

Jesus says...yes in the moment I gave them my back for whipping....I gave them my cheeks for ripping out my beard...by the way...Jesus had a beard...In the moment I did not hide....IN the moment I did not hide. They tried to disgrace me but the Lord helps me so I can't truly be disgraced.

My face is like flint turned away from this moment and toward the mission that God has for me. Bring it on...my face is chiseled...like flint...because I know the moment is dim...but my path..is LIT UP.

Luke 9:52–53 (ESV) 52 And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. 53 But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.

Ok this is odd. He probably send James and John ahead of Him. But Jesus went to Jerusalem by way of Samaria. Jews didn't really go through Samaria on their way to Jerusalem....and yet here goes Jesus again....remember the Samaritan woman?

Do you remember the story of the Samaritans? When the Assyrians invaded the Northern Kingdom it they brought in non-Jewish colonists after the conquest of 722 b.c.. These mixed Jews-Gentiles developed their own translation of the Scriptures, built their own temple of worship on Mt. Gerazim and decided that they didn't have to travel to Jerusalem anymore for the mandatory feasts to the Lord. The Jews hated them for that.

So two things are odd here. One that Jesus went through Samaria to Jerusalem and two, that He had to show that they rejected Him and showed Him no hospitality.

And did you notice why? His face was set to Jerusalem

Jesus hardened His face; not in the sense of becoming a hard or angry man, but in the sense of having focus, and having focus through a difficult time.

There are two kinds of courage—the courage of moment, which requires no previous thought, and a planned courage, which sees the difficulty ahead and steadfastly marches towards it. Jesus had this kind of courage; He saw the cross on the horizon, but still steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

The reason alleged by them was that this Teacher, who wished to come among them, was on his way up to worship at the rival temple at Jerusalem.

Luke wants us to see that rejection is his fate. Even though that rejection will occur in the capital of Israel, the Samaritan reaction mirrors that coming reality. The world is not responsive to Jesus; rejection will be widespread.

Luke 9:54 (ESV) 54 And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

This is incredible! My first thought is Wow you can do that?...just call down fire from heaven.....like it is just another day at work. And it seems like they are asking this somewhat non-chalantly. Like "Hey Jesus can we do anything for you? You got a lot going on today...how can we help. Want us to smoke the Samaritans for you?"

They had absolute faith that they could call down fire from heaven and destroy the Samaritan village. They were after all Jewish. They have probably wanted to do this their entire life.

My other thought was "Man how did Peter not get in on this deal? This is a definite Peter kind of move?" Peter always seems to act before he thinks. He is the impulsive one.

And what is more incredible is that Jesus seems to agree with them. At least in their ability to call down fire from Heaven. He doesn't say, "You guys on your best day couldn't do that" Jesus implies that they have that power.

Luke 9:55–56 (ESV) 55 But he turned and rebuked them. 56 And they went on to another village.

Interesting to note that Jesus did all kinds of miracles. He spoke of living water. Turned water to wine. People were baptized with water. Jesus calmed storms...controlling the wind...Jesus used dirt to bring sight to the blind....But Jesus never used fire to bring about His miracles. Fire is reserved for the final judgment.

Notice that Jesus turned. His face is set to Jerusalem, but He is not so focused that He misses the heart of His disciples. He turned and rebuked them. His resolve and purpose are long term. The bigger picture is that He is set to Jerusalem, but He is still teaching, leading, and rebuking in the moment.

The Greek word translated "another" suggests that our Lord, after the insult offered by the Samaritans, quietly turned his steps to a Jewish community.

Notice one other thing. Jesus has his face set to Jerusalem. He will go there for one purpose. To be rejected by the Jews. To be rejected by God's select people. So it is important that it is clear that the Samaritans, these half-Jews, rejected Him as well.

Jesus would lament over Jerusalem soon. He would tell them how much He wanted them to receive Him but they would not. He was lamenting over all of them....including the Samaritans. By the time Jesus gets to the cross it is clear that His own people rejected Him. Just as the prophets hundreds of years prior had foretold.

So the beginning of the Easter Story is the moment in Jesus' ministry when He turns toward the cross. From this moment forward....each step takes Jesus to His destiny. To fulfill the Father's will ...His overall plan...through a series of difficult and terrible moments.

Even though the upcoming moments are going to be horrible. God is pleased to allow them...because overall the mission will save the world and bring glory to the Father.

So what is your face set toward today? Are you focused on the moment or the mission? Do you see what is happening in your life as a series of glorious opportunities to grow in your trust and faith knowing that you are a part of God's plan for the world? Is your focus on how to use your life to bring the greatest glory to Him? Is your heart set on His purposes and plans for the world first and your needs and life second? OR

Are you so focused on this moment in your life that you have lost perspective? Are you placing your convenience, your comfort, and your needs ahead of God's mission to save others? As if God should thwart His overall mission for mankind because it brings inconvenience, worry or anxiety to you in the moment?

We are headed into times that are going to be far worse than Covid 19. God's people need to be focused on the overall mission of God and not their own comfort and convenience. Jesus said, that plagues and earthquakes were just the beginning of labor pains....But He also told us what was coming....

Matthew 24:7–10 (ESV) 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. 9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

Let me leave you with a thought for the week. Do you want to know if you are focused on the moment or the mission? Answer this question and you will know.

IF you could be killed for being here worshiping God this morning. If people said that meeting here was illegal and forbidden....and the punishment was death...would you still be here this morning?

Seriously, would you be? Jesus said you will be hated by ALL NATIONS and put to death for my name's sake.

Is God's mission on earth....His plan of salvation for the world...His desire to reach those who don't yet know Him...more important to you than anything else in the world?

Or does that only really matter as long as you stay comfortable, safe and wrinkle free in the moments of your life?

Jesus says that day is coming and many will fall away. Is your face chiseled and set to the mission God has called you to or is He talking about you. Let's pray.