

## CHRIST AS OUR SOURCE

January 6 and 13, 2010

John 1:1-18 Revelation 22:13

Dennis Henley

We're talking here in these weeks after Christmas, known as Epiphany, about finding a center to our individual lives

What kind of things tend to be the central things for most people?

Money seems to be a big one – I recently saw that no matter how much money people make, it's never enough and the statistic was something like, “if I made another 20% I'd be set” - so they make the extra 20 and at that point need even more

If money is central, it certainly isn't satisfying – many celebrities make enormous sums of money and yet cannot find lasting happiness

How about position – wielding influence, calling the shots, making the big decisions

Sounds great when you're somewhere down the ladder, but if the opportunity arises and the position is achieved, it's often discovered that it's lonely at the top – when things don't work out, you're the goat

For others, it may be time – sounds worthy; time is valuable, truly a non-renewable resource – you can replace lost money and rebuild a career, but once time slips away, it's gone for good

It's easy to become protective of time to the point where you say “no” to a lot of things that might ultimately prove to be rewarding

The arrival of Jesus on that first Christmas provided a center to human history and those of us who inhabit it

The birth of Jesus marks the demarcation between BC and AD on our calendar, between Old Testament and New

And as a center point for history and for our own lives, Jesus is what we might term the source, through which we begin to find balance

*Jesus is present at the beginning (John 1:3)*

*In Genesis, it reports God saying, “Let us create man in OUR own image” - plural*

*When we relate that to John 1:3 we see Jesus being present at creation – the **source of all things***

The Korean Creed which we reference from time to time puts it like this, “We believe in Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, our teacher, example and Redeemer, the Savior of the world” And God is identified as the “source of all goodness and beauty, truth and love”

If that describes God, it also describes Jesus who told his disciple Philip, “If you've seen me, you've seen the Father (God).”

So we're talking about Jesus as the SOURCE of what?

**UNITY** – Ephesians 4:4-6

“There is one body and one Spirit. You were appointed to the one hope when you were chosen. There is one Lord, one faith and one baptism. There is one God and Father of all. He is over everything. He is through everything. He is everything.”

Paul went to the Greeks, the Romans, the Jews and anyone else he came across in his ministry  
He proclaimed the same God, the same Savior to great and small, rich and poor, powerful and afflicted

The early church had members of all walks of life, often with slaves and their masters together

This month we celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and remember the work King offered to unify people of all races and backgrounds, most notably in his "I Have a Dream" speech  
In October we observe World Wide Communion where Christian churches of all backgrounds come together in a common act of worship despite differences in geography, worship style and even theology

Despite all our differences, Jesus is our source of unity where everything else fails

**ASSURANCE** – Back in 1987 I was setting up a retirement fund. Didn't want anything risky, and the consultant "assured me" that all was good. Two months later the market crashed and 1/3 of my money was gone! Assurance is not found in a bank account, stock portfolio or cash stashed somewhere.

I know I need assurance in an unsure, unpredictable world. I watch the news and feel disheartened, sometimes distressed

Politics isn't going to assure me; Money is elusive; where can I find a secure foundation?

Revelation 22:13 - "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. I am the beginning and the end."

Jesus is present over all time and all things. We can be assured that in the final analysis things are going to be made fair, just and right; qualities not always seen in our present time/place

I went with a youth group to a big maze one Halloween – you get into this thing and become disoriented and lost; feeling your way around in the dark or tricked by mirrors

Sometimes life feels like that – you want a little assurance you'll get through it

Jesus is the source of that assurance

**PEACE** - "Peace be with you" (John 20:21 and Mark 4:39)

There are a lot of references to peace in the Bible (OT and NT) – It's what was proclaimed by the angelic chorus at the time of Jesus' birth, so it's a key reason for his arrival among us

In John 20:21 we find Jesus' followers huddled in the upper room fearful of arrest, disheartened by the crucifixion and death of Jesus, when he appears among them and proclaims, "Peace be with you." Who else is going to be able to do that? Christ alone!

And in Mark 4:39 in the midst of a storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus commands the wind and waves, "Peace! Be still!" Who else can do that? No one

So Jesus is our one sure source for finding peace

**EMPOWERMENT**

Do you ever feel really limited in what you can do? What difference you can make? What lasting impact you can have on the the world around you?

I know I do... I often feel inadequate

Sometimes at funerals, I just don't know what to say

Sometimes people ask advice and I don't know what to tell them

Every time I write a sermon I wonder, "what do I have to offer here?"

On my own, not much, BUT...

In Matt 28:19 Jesus tells his disciples, also inadequately equipped, to go into a hostile world and proclaim the Gospel, baptize boldly, share the faith and that in doing so, "I will be with you always, to the end of the age" Jesus says.

Jesus also assures us as his followers in John 14 that, "I will not leave you orphaned" and that he would provide a counselor, the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us  
We don't need to carry on the mission alone, relying on ourselves... we just need to be open to allowing Christ and his Holy Spirit to work through us  
A hammer can't drive a nail on it's own, but the carpenter can use it to do that  
Let the carpenter empower you to do his work and fulfill his will

**LIFE** (John 10:10) "I have come that (you) may have life and have it more abundantly"  
That's not to be understood as material gain, though living a Christian life helps accomplish that  
It means helping us gain a life that is fulfilling and purposeful - a life that makes a difference  
We held a memorial for my dad shortly before Christmas  
My dad lived a life that touched a lot of other lives  
He offered encouragement and hope to people in times of distress  
He helped people find their way when they had hard decisions to make  
He and my mother kept we three kids on the straight and narrow  
The church was filled with those who's life Dad had touched  
It was Dad's dedication to Christ that accomplished that through a life well lived  
Jesus is the source of meaningful life for any of us who will open the door  
"I stand at the door and knock" - he doesn't bust it down, doesn't impose, but will enter into our lives when invited

**FORGIVENESS** (Luke 23:34 and 23:43)  
Forgiveness is sometimes a hard commodity to come up with  
Another pastor I know was in the drive through line at a restaurant just before Christmas and decided to pay for the order placed by the next car in line – a "pay it forward" gesture  
The driver of the car behind her was getting impatient and started blowing the horn and offering an unflattering salute – the pastor paid for the order anyway and could only smile while pulling out, wondering what expression was on that other person's face when they found out why the delay.  
"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this you will heap burning coals upon his head." Romans 12:20  
Jesus forgave those who crucified him – the Pharisees, the Romans, the hostile crowd  
"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."  
He forgave the thief on the cross next to him; a man who had led a useless, harmful life and offered him forgiveness and eternal life right then and there  
Jesus is the source of forgiveness

**DIRECTION** (John 14:6) "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life" No one comes to the Father except through me."  
One time we were driving westward and stopped for dinner near the Indiana/Illinois line and I asked the waitress where the time zone change took effect – She had no idea  
It turned out to be a couple miles away at the state line  
If you want directions, you need to ask someone who knows  
If you want directions to eternal life, who are you going to ask? Somebody who thinks anything spiritual is sufficient? Someone who doesn't believe in heaven or hell? Someone who suggests it's a matter of the good outweighing the bad?  
Best to make sure they know what they're talking about – Jesus is the sure source of direction  
I don't want to bet eternity on anything or anyone else

So Jesus is to be at our center, our guide, our shepherd – he and he alone is the one true source of all we need.