

**"Being Reformed"
(2 Kings 22:1-13)
Pastor Peter Yi
January 1, 2017**

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³ In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent the secretary, Shaphan son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the temple of the Lord. He said: ⁴ "Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest and have him get ready the money that has been brought into the temple of the Lord, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people. ⁵ Have them entrust it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple. And have these men pay the workers who repair the temple of the Lord— ⁶ the carpenters, the builders and the masons. Also have them purchase timber and dressed stone to repair the temple. ⁷ But they need not account for the money entrusted to them, because they are honest in their dealings."

⁸ Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord." He gave it to Shaphan, who read it. ⁹ Then Shaphan the secretary went to the king and reported to him: "Your officials have paid out the money that was in the temple of the Lord and have entrusted it to the workers and supervisors at the temple." ¹⁰ Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.

¹¹ When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. ¹² He gave these orders to Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's attendant: ¹³ "Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord's anger that burns against us because those who have gone before us have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us."

Happy, Happy New Year, everyone. May this year be a year where each of you, your families, and our church experience more deeply and intimately the love of Jesus and may this be a year where we strive to be a church that will lead peoples near and far to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

I want to tell you that God did some amazing things in our community in 2016. If you remember we began the year focusing on discipleship, challenging each of us to enter into a disciple making relationship. We did the jade plant thing where we all got a plant, raised it, grew a second plant and gave it to the person we were discipling. And so many of you stepped up to the challenge. There were at least 60 people that participated in our discipleship classes. There were 29 mentoring pairs, meaning that there were another 60 people acting as mentors or mentees. There were around 200 people involved in Life Groups, which is a great place for discipleship to happen in a group setting. On top of that there were so many other places where discipleship was taking place such as women's prayer meetings, men's accountability groups, teachers pouring into children in our children's education department, on university campuses, around kitchen tables and while tucking children into bed, after pick-up hockey, and thousands of informal Christ-centered conversations that occurred throughout the year. I want to tell you all how grateful to God I am and how proud I am of you for responding to that invitation to be involved in discipleship.

What's in store for us in 2017? What is going to make this year special? Is it because it's our church's 40th anniversary? Yeah, for sure. Is it because it's our country's 150th birthday? Possibly. Is it because it's our church's 20th anniversary since adopting the Kyrgyz people as one of our primary missions focus? We hope so. Or is it because it's the 500th anniversary of one the greatest events in church history called the Reformation? Absolutely.

Today's message is kind of a state of the union, vision casting message for 2017. As you listen to this message try to discern where God is inviting you to become involved. Let me begin with reading this scripture.

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(2 Kings 22:1–13 NIV11-GK)

Throughout history there have been very special times that are called spiritual renewals or revivals or reformations. These events are called revivals and not 'vivals'—meaning that they occur among those who are already God's people, but they have become spiritually weak, apathetic, and sometimes even blatantly disobedient. Now revival doesn't always happen to these spiritually dead groups. Sometimes it never happens and they die in their deadness. Revivals have occurred at all levels—individual and personal, families, churches, communities, cities, regions, nationally, and even internationally.

The revival is almost always preceded by a long period of spiritual deadness or lethargy. The deadness is usually the result of idolatry where God's people have rejected God and have entertained idols in their lives. As well there is an overwhelming spiritual deadness, a mere going through the motions of life apart from the presence of God. There is no concern for evangelism or the problems of society. And this next thing is really important. This condition or stage of spiritual deadness is almost always the result of the absence of the Word of God in that person's life or church.

Think about why that is. The Westminster Confession tells us in question 2:
What rule has God given to direct us how to glorify and enjoy him?

And the answer is:

The Word of God, which consists of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how to glorify and enjoy him.

Human beings were created to live out their greatest purpose and experience their greatest joy only in relationship to God. Apart from that relationship, those things can never happen. How could a person know how to enjoy God and glorify God and find purpose in God unless they discover it in God's only revelation to humanity, the Bible? The answer is they can't.

Every revival, no matter how big or small is accompanied or initiated by an encounter with the Word of God. Let me give you a couple examples. The greatest revival a person can experience is their conversion, which is when a non-Christian person becomes a Christian. That person who is not a Christian can only become a Christian by encountering the Word of God, by reading it or hearing it. That's how God designed it. Also, throughout our lives we go through many many mini revivals and perhaps a couple major revivals. What triggers those small and large revivals are encounters with the word of God. For example, you might be singing a worship song and a certain line, rich in theology and biblical truth grabs your heart. You wish you could tell the media guy to flip back the slide. But what happens, that truth encounter lifts your soul up to God in deeper worship or deeper repentance or both. You also have a deeper experience of God's love or majesty. That little revival occurred because an encounter with God's word in a song.

And, finally, here's a final example. We all know very well that mini and major personal revivals also occur as a result of hearing the word of God preached. A line, an argument, a word, a truth clutches your head and heart, your heart begins to race and swell, you feel you have to hold back the emotions. But right there and then, your spirit is awakened and you encounter God.

This is the means by which God chooses to bring about spiritual life into our lives. Now, sadly not everyone believes this. Recently there was a survey that was reported on in Macleans magazine about spiritual growth in mainline churches. Let me first define mainline churches. They are not Catholic, which means they are protestant, like we are. But they are not evangelical like we are. They are what we would call liberal. They hold to a much lesser standard of the authority of the Bible. If you remember it's from within the liberal church that last year a pastor received a lot of publicity because she was being released for being an atheist. So apparently that's the line that can't be crossed in liberal churches. You can't be an atheist, but other than that, you're welcome to pastor a church. So this survey done among liberal protestant churches in Canada asked the question, what is the key to growing these churches. And here's the subtitle to the article:

"An exclusive remarkable study finds that mainline Protestant churches that focus on the Gospel and prayer are growing, while those that don't are in decline." (Macleans Nov 16, 2016). As an evangelical we read that with a sense of disbelief because that's all evangelical churches do is focus on the gospel and prayer.

Let me give you some of the conclusions from that article: Churches that don't believe God really answers prayer are not growing. Churches that really do believe God answers prayer are growing.

Churches that believe Jesus died and really rose again from the dead are growing. And churches that don't believe that are not growing.

Now, here's the shocker. Churches that believe in evangelism are growing and churches that don't believe in evangelism are not growing.

All this to prove that even in the liberal church the same principles apply. The value a church places on the word will determine the spiritual vitality of that church.

We just read the account of Josiah, an Old Testament king. It had been the case that when he came into power there was no known copy of the books of Moses, the Torah. It was the equivalent of trying to do church, trying to do Christian life without a Bible, which is the case in some restrictive countries. Well, it wasn't until the 18th year of his reign that something miraculous happened. The books of Moses were found, they were read and God brought revival. Now what's amazing is that this occurred in his 18th year, meaning that this young king from 8 years old to 26 years old had no encounter with the word of God and was probably just going through with religious traditions. Once the priest found the book, he read it and then reported to king Josiah and it was read to him. Immediately upon hearing the word of God, his first action was repentance. He tore his robes. And it's true repentance because he sets out to do everything written in the Law. Josiah gives orders to clean house in all the land. Every idol, every pagan temple was torn down and the religion of Yahweh was reinstated. And he begins to do worship and religion the way that is prescribed in the Law. This is one of the great examples in the Bible of revival influenced by an encounter with the Word of God.

Don't you want to experience revival? Don't you want our church to experience this kind of revival? Don't you want this for your family and friends? Don't you want to see a revival of God at your workplace? Don't you want to see a revival of Josiah's magnitude in our city? Things like that have happened.

500 years ago on October 31, 1517, a German, Roman Catholic monk named Martin Luther sparked one of the greatest revivals in Christian history. The church of Europe was the Roman Catholic Church and it had gone so far from the teachings of the Bible. It was filled with corruption from the pope all the way down. It actually prevented the word of God from getting into the hands of the people and killed those who did so. One day, Martin Luther made a list of 95 topics on theology, doctrine and church practices that he thought should be open for discussion. These are famously called the **95 theses**. He posted them on a church in Wittenberg Germany. These 95 theses was the spark that ignited the Reformation. It was called the Reformation because the goal was to reform, that is correct the Catholic church that had gone into great error. It is the moment in history where protestants were formed. They were called protestants because they protested against the incorrect teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic church.

Because the Reformation was about correcting error and bringing us back to the truth, several very important doctrines emerged from it. Now these doctrines weren't invented at the Reformation. They were always there in Scripture and in the church, centuries before the 1500s, but they were distorted and lost. First and foremost was the doctrine of Sola Scriptura. What does that mean? It means, Only Scripture. Scripture alone holds the authority for what we are to believe and live out. Scripture, as opposed to what? Well the Catholic belief back then and even today is Scripture plus tradition, even if the tradition is in opposition to scripture. So this is the most important truth to come out of the Reformation. Everything hinges from this first truth. Everything originates from Sola Scriptura.

The second most important doctrine that came out of the Reformation is the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone. A more expanded explanation goes like this. A person is saved, that is made right with God, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This is the cardinal doctrine that separates Catholics from Protestants. It is the doctrine on which our salvation stands or falls. I remember listening to a John Piper podcast years ago. This might have been during the time of Pope John Paul was the pope, three popes ago. And he was asked, if you had 10 minutes with the Pope what would you ask him. He answered, I would ask him what he believes about justification. Why? Because it is the central doctrine that separates Catholics and Protestants.

One other major doctrine that came out of the Reformation was the Priesthood of all believers. At that time there was a very clear distinction placed between clergy, the priests, and the laity, or congregation. Thus Roman Catholics have the practice of Confession or Last Rites, which can only be done by a priest. Well there is no biblical teaching for such a distinction, so out of the Reformation came the correct teaching that we are a kingdom of priests, that all believers are priests in Christ's kingdom.

This coming year, we are going to be looking at the Reformation and the major doctrines that came out of the Reformation. For the first time ever in our church at least, one of our pastors will be teaching a class on church history on the Reformation. I will be preaching/teaching on the major doctrines of that came out of the Bible that are called the Five Solas: Sola Scriptura. Gratia. Fide. Solus Christus and Soli Deo Gloria; Justification by Faith, and the Priesthood of all believers. However, I'll be focusing mostly on the first one, Sola Scriptura.

I want us to become a church that has an insatiable hunger for the word, great confidence in the word, and for us to experience tremendous revival in our encounters with the word. So beginning today, commit to reading the entire Bible this year. Pick up a chronological Bible reading plan at the welcome center. Commit to read it with great faith and trust in God's word as true and powerful and personal. Read the Bible with a prayerful heart. Try to respond to every chapter of the Bible with some kind of reflective prayer.

Another opportunity that this preaching focus brings is to reach out to our Catholic friends. Many Catholics are unaware of what they really believe, so this might be a great opportunity to share with them the errors of Catholicism and introduce to them correct teaching from the Bible.

We want to keep the momentum of discipleship going strong into the New Year. My goal is to see every member of our church to have at least taken our Discipleship 1 class before the end of the year. And if you've taken D1 and D2 I want you to seriously consider becoming a Discipleship class leader.

As well, I want to challenge those of us who are Christians, but are not yet members to become members of the church. By not being a member of the church, I think you are missing out on so many opportunities to grow in faith. By choosing not to be a member you are making church less important and less of a priority in your life. You're robbing yourself of opportunities to give, to serve and to grow. So I hope you will become a committed member this year.

There are many of you who have been attending our church for quite some time, but you are not yet a Christian for various reasons. Would it be okay if I leaned on you a little bit? In 2017, why don't you take some steps to dig a little deeper to investigate Christianity. You can read the Bible to discover truly who God is and what Christianity is about. Ask questions. Reach out to a Christian friend or one of the pastors and ask the hard questions that you have. Pray to God the prayer of a seeker. Ask God to reveal himself to you this year. Sign up for Christianity Explored to explore the true meaning of Christianity.

The other thing that often accompanies revival is prayer. Many prayers are prayed before a person becomes a Christian. Many prayers are prayed before a wandering sheep is brought back home. Many prayers are prayed for even our own souls to come to life again. Many prayers are prayed before people are called to Christian ministry. So here are three prayer challenges I have for you.

1. Devote 15 minutes a day to pray.
2. Devote to pray with others in one way or another. You can form a prayer group with your friends. Or start attending our Saturday morning prayer meetings. A quick note on personal prayer groups. Be sure to balance personal prayer request with missional prayer requests. If it becomes too self-centered, it'll be counter-productive and will stop being effective.
3. Attend one of several concerts of prayer meetings that we'll have throughout the year.

Finally, let me offer a challenge as it relates to missions, outreach, missional living:

1. Make it a goal to share the gospel, verbally, clearly with a one non-Christian in 2017. It's great to pray for that person, but at some point you have to open your mouth. Okay? Just one person.
2. Bring back a lost sheep. In 2016, one of the most encouraging things that I witnessed is many lost sheep coming back to God. Here's who I mean by lost sheep. A lost sheep is not a former City member who is now faithfully attending another church. Leave them alone. A lost sheep is someone who you used to go to church with, or served alongside when you were on campus, but for whatever reason, drifted from or altogether abandoned the faith. Bring them back.
[SJT: Invite one person to church]
3. Go on missions. It's no secret that our summer missions involvement has been waning the last couple of years. We've been sending bare minimum teams. What I want to see this year is full teams of 8-10 people going to all the places we go. They are waiting for us. They need us to go and share the Gospel. Also, we need one or two 1 year missionaries in both Cambodia at Living Fountain and at the Jaryk centre in Kyrgystan. Give one year of your life to God and these peoples. I promise you that it'll be time well spent and you will have no regrets. And finally, I'm really serious about this. We want to be a church that always has someone in the pipeline ready to go to unreached people groups as a career missionary. If that's you, you need to speak with one of you pastors so you can get the guidance and direction you need.

May God bless us as we kick off this new year.

Let's pray.