

Sermon: Tamed or Transformed

Text: 2 Chronicles 22-24

Discussion Questions:

In John 12:22, Jesus said, *"Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."*

Botanically, Jesus is talking about germination. A seed consists of a protective coat, some kind of storage tissue with nutrient reserves, and a dormant plant embryo. Under the proper conditions, the dormant embryo can be "awakened" to germinate and grow into a mature plant.

The Apostle Paul was particularly taken with the illustration of a seed losing its life as a seed to become a mature plant. He used this idea in many of his letters to various early churches. For example, in Romans 8:9-10, Paul states, *"But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness."*

- Both Jesus and Paul talk about death and dying - the seed dies, and the body is dead. How do these things connect? What must we put to death? Where does this transformation happen?
- Thinking further in terms of seed germination, certain things are required for the seed to be "awakened." There must be just the right blend of soil, water, oxygen, and proper temperature. If all of these things aren't in place, the seed won't "die." Using this as a metaphor - and thinking of our hearts as a seed - what conditions must exist for "germination" take place in our lives? What is the evidence that germination has taken place?

Examination:

- Read **Matthew 7:21-23**.
 - What is your immediate reaction to these words?
 - Who might those people be who say to Jesus, "Lord, Lord?" This is actually a very important question. Drill down on this. Eternity seems to be hanging in the balance with respect to how we understand and answer this question. Jesus says here in v. 22 that "many people will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord.'" Who are these *many people*? What kinds of things do these *many people* accomplish for God? How can they do these things - and still be called "workers of lawlessness?"
 - Talk a little bit about doing the will of God. This seems to be a very important thing when it comes to entering the kingdom of heaven. Only those who do the will of God the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven. How do we know what the will of the Father is? Could it be that those who drove out demons and performed miracles - while these are good things - weren't acting in accordance with the Father's will?
 - How can people do things FOR God, without truly KNOWING God?
 - What does it mean to know God - and for God to know us?

- Do these verses: A) Scare you? B) Encourage you? C) Inspire you? D) Motivate you? E) None of the above? F) All of the above?
- Read **Colossians 3:1-17**.
 - This theme of dying (ie: seed germination) permeates these verses. It's clear that to be counted as one of "God's chosen ones" (v. 12), there has to have been a death. What has died?
 - In v. 4, we read that we "have died, and our life is hidden with Christ in God." What does it mean that our life is hidden with Christ in God? How is our life "hidden?" Hidden from what?
 - The "seeking" that we're told to do in v. 1 is explained in v. 2 - "Setting our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." These words can roll nicely off of our tongues. It sounds like good "Christianese." But what does this really mean in our day-to-day lives? How easy is it to set our minds on things that are on earth? How do we NOT set our minds on things that are on earth? What are some very practical things we can do each day - all day long - to consciously take our minds off of the things that are on earth, and set our minds on things above?
 - We don't talk much about the wrath of God (v. 6). According to this passage, who will experience the wrath of God? What are some clues that someone might be in danger of experiencing God's wrath?
 - These verses talk about an "old self" and a "new self." What does this mean? How does this fit with what Jesus said in Matthew 7 about those who truly know and are known by God?
 - We see here that the Word of Christ must dwell in our hearts - and the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. Does this make sense to you? Is this happening for you? Why or why not?
 - What role does thanksgiving play in what Paul says here? What role does worship play in what Paul says here? What role does love play in what Paul says here?

Application:

Today's sermon is about the life of one of the kings of Judah - a man named Joash. We see in the story that his aunt and uncle (*named Jehosheba and Jehoiada*) were very influential in his life as a young man. As long as they were alive, Joash made some excellent choices. But after their death, Joash began listening to other voices. There is strong evidence to suggest that his heart had never been truly transformed by God. He played the part of a "good and Godly young man." But when the positive influences were removed - his true colors came out.

As you begin a new year, think about your own life. What resolutions can you make that address a change of heart - not just a temporary change in behavior?