

Sunday, Jan. 4

Pastor Steve set a trajectory for 2026 by starting in Psalm 1. He said it was important to help illustrate his hope for Celebration Church in 2026: 1) we want to grow in Christ, 2) we want to know Him better, 3) we want to please Him in every good work, 4) we want to live out the victory over sin that we have in Christ.

“We want to grow, know, and show,” he said. “We want to show Him in our lives.” Then, holding up his Bible, he added, “You have not exhausted the contents of this Book. You need tent pegs to anchor this in your life. If we’re going to grow, know and show, we need to have a source.”

Noting that we started Sunday school two years ago, Steve said biblical education is necessary as we see the culture changing around us, where people don’t know the Bible. Joking about the thin grape Kool-Aid served at VBS in his childhood, he said a lot of Christians are like that: thin on substance. We want to grow in God’s Word so we can add another packet of Kool-Aid to the drum.

After a brief mention of verse 1’s prohibition against taking counsel from the wicked, he focused on verse 2 and its mention of delighting in the law. Those two words don’t often go together; our sinful parts don’t like to be told “no” or “go.” The struggle of the Christian life is getting a new heart but still being encased in sinful flesh. While delight in God’s law is a gift, it can only be increased by repetitive use.

“I don’t want a snapshot of Steve Wayne to be a distended belly because I’m eating everything but good food, which is Scripture,” he said. He went on to describe the biblical terms for the Word, like fire in the bones, bread, honey, water, and cleaning power. In Deuteronomy 28, it also describes the blessings of listening to the Word, and the curses that come from ignoring it. Joshua 1:8 says it shall not depart from our mouth, while Deuteronomy 6:8 says it should be a sign on our hand. Colossians 3:16 says we should let the Word dwell in us richly, and Romans 10:17 says faith comes by hearing the Word. Steve also read 2 Timothy 3:14-17, which he says offers advice to all of us: the Word is to equip the pastor and the people.

“All of us are called to do things for God,” Steve said. “You are a trophy of God’s grace. He is equipping us for good works. The equipping is not coming from you ... what’s going to equip us is Scripture.”

Sunday, Jan. 11

Pastor Steve titled today’s sermon “On the Health of Trees: Part II.” He then explained he forgot to review the reference to trees in his first sermon. It comes from verse 3, which says a man who delights in God’s Word is like a tree planted by streams of water. Today’s text came from Jeremiah 17:5-10, which talks about those who trust in the Lord or in people.

“Where do we go?” Steve said of the search for truth. “Do we realize how much the world has crept into our thinking? A Christian sends down roots into Scripture by reading it. To say the Word of God is a delight is foreign to some people.”

The passage in Jeremiah starts much like Psalm 1, with a negative observation about God saying those who turn away from the Lord are cursed. We too have to ask ourselves where we turn in times of tragedy. The prophet wrote at a time when Israel was

tempted to rely on Egypt and the world. We too face the temptation today to trust in worldly answers or political strength. But Jeremiah tells us that nations that do that are cursed.

Noting verse 9's remark that the heart is deceitful above all things, Steve said that shouldn't offer any of us comfort. When we turn to men for answers, we become like the "shrub in the desert" mentioned in verse 6. People who do not turn to God are perpetually blind to His goodness and live cynical lives. If we can't see any good in God, we swing from the extreme of cynicism to unrealistic optimism outside of God.

"Blessed is the man whose trust is in the Lord," Steve said. "Trust in God means we have strength and confidence in the Lord. I hope in God, but simultaneously He is my hope. You can't trust without Him. God is the object of my faith. My faith is not in my ability to believe. I believe He is the one who empowers me to continue to trust in Him."

Christianity isn't us winning our heart away from something; we are a passive receiver of God's goodness and mercy. That's what grace is, Steve said: we don't give—we only receive. We love Jesus because He first loved us. Even when we don't understand everything, we trust in Him because, as Jeremiah says, blessed are those who trust is in the Lord.

"In the season of drought, it keeps making fruit," Steve said of people who trust in the Lord. "(He) is my hope and strength. It's why we should read the Bible every day, so we have ammunition for drought ... Your roots go deep into something glorious."

Sunday, Jan. 18

Today concluded the "On the Health of Trees" series. Pastor Steve started by having various members read Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, and 1 Peter 4:7-11. He also mentioned Paul addressing the cultural tension between Gentile and Jew in Romans 11, where the apostle pointed out the Gentiles were grafted onto the olive tree.

"God took an olive tree and grafted in a wild branch," Steve said. "Peter was telling the Gentiles they couldn't be haughty about being grafted in and look down on the Jews."

In reviewing Romans 12, he discussed how Paul used the human body as a metaphor for the body of Christ. Not all parts of the body have the same function, just as not all parts of the body of Christ serve the same purpose. God gives different gifts to people according to His grace, and we are to use them to bless others.

After reading verses 4-6, Steve said, "(Paul) is saying it's not going to be the same (for everyone). ... That's true of you. Some are encouragers, exhorters, or leaders. Dan leads a company, but ... it morphs around the fact that he is a Christian. Use what God gave you to use. We are stewards of the gifts God has given."

The fact God gives the gifts should take care of narcissistic tendencies, said Steve, noting the ego-centric nature of human behavior. He said it's awesome that God draws a geometric pattern with crooked sticks, but indeed He wants to manifest His Spirit in each of us in some way. Those gifts are for the common good, not about elevating any one of us. Pointing to 1 Corinthians 12:11, he said all are empowered by the Spirit.

Turning to 1 Peter 4:7-11, Steve talked of verse 8's note that love covers a multitude of sins. Each of us can be abrasive and irritating, but Paul admonishes us to keep on loving each other, since that quality is what will keep us together in spite of the

annoying things we do. We need to keep loving those who annoy us, remembering that we too can annoy others.

“God is uniquely using His people,” Steve said. “Your experience, your testimony, is what God has done in your life. Serving one another as good stewards is what God wants us to do. We get to serve, teach, heal, give prophetic utterances—all of it is for service.”

Each of us should ask the question, “How can I serve?” he added. After mentioning 2 Timothy 1:6 and its admonition to stir up the gift within us, Steve said the more we read the Bible and pray the more laser-focused we will be on how God can use us.

Sunday, Jan. 25

The Tri-State Area got walloped by snow and ice Saturday, so badly we didn't have a church service today. However, Pastor Steve recorded a devotional at home, which was aired on YouTube around 11 a.m. He spoke about Psalm 147, which he called an example of a doxology and praise, written around the time of the return of Israel from captivity in Babylon.

It carries a tenor of praise and joy, he said, and points to God binding up the brokenhearted and healing their wounds. It immediately goes into who God is: He is the Creator and the one who numbers the stars. When we consider the vastness of the universe, it is beyond our comprehension; the more we learn scientifically the more complex we learn creation is.

“The same God is concerned with you on an individual level,” Steve said. “The Psalm is connecting them to each other. God who created the universe, named the stars, binds up the wounds, and heals the brokenhearted ... just because He is the Creator of the universe does not mean He isn't concerned with individuals.”

He is the Lord God omnipotent and the source of comfort, he added. God is redeeming the time and bringing about the greatest things in our lives. He is in charge of everything, down to the growing grass. He provides food for the beasts of the field and the birds in the forest or in the jungle, where we may never see. The Lord also takes joy in those who love Him. He is not impressed with His creation—His creation should be impressed with Him.

“God is looking for those to show Himself strong on behalf of those who love Him,” Steve said. “In the midst of difficulties, no matter what's going on, He's doing a work and I'm going to trust in Him.”

Commenting on the weather forecasts that predicted we would have deep snowfall and instead we had little snow but lots of ice, he said God decides when the ice will come and when it will go. The Lord is in charge of everything and our job is to fear Him and trust in Him.