

Follow the Milky Way!

1 Peter 2:1-3; Hebrews 5:12;

The South has really been hit hard by storms of late. We all got a taste of it on Monday when the effects of Tropical storm Irma came through and left her mark on Hall County.

Most of us here today were impacted in some way. Many of us were without power most of last week. We all saw the effects of a powerful storm. But, I want you to know today that we serve a powerful God. Sometimes He calms the storm and sometimes He calms His child in the midst of the storm. The winds of Monday made me respect the power of nature, and caused me to say a few extra prayers! But, do we respect God's creation and God's power and God's miraculous work, when there is no storm?

For instance, you may feel as if you are sitting still right now, but it's an illusion of miraculous proportions. Planet Earth is spinning around its axis at a speed of 1,000 miles per hour. Every 24 hours, planet Earth does a complete 360. We're also hurtling through space at an average velocity of 67,108 miles per hour. That's not just faster than a speeding bullet. It's 87 times faster than the speed of sound. So even on a day when you feel like you didn't get much done, don't forget that you did travel 1,599,793 miles through space! To top things off, the Milky Way is spinning like a galactic pinwheel at the dizzying rate of 483,000 mph. If that isn't miraculous, I don't know what is!

And speaking of Milky Way...that's our candy for today, that will serve as a reminder of this sermon. **(Hand out Milky Way Candy)** Now I've been giving these sweet reminders on Start Up beginning in 2011 when everyone received "**M&M's**" = and

the message connected with that was: **We serve a Mighty and Majestic God.**

Then followed, "**Yoo Hoos**" in 2012 = with the message from the Psalmist, "*O God, You who have done great things*" and Jesus classic words: "*Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.*"

For 2013 it was "**The Three Musketeers candy bar**" - And the message from Romans 12:5 *so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*" Then, the motto, "**All for one and one for all.**"

The candy in 2014 was: "**Now & Later.**" And the message - **God is working in you now, and God will finish his work, later.** "He who began a good work in you will carry it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." – Philippians 1:6

In 2015 it was "**Lifesavers**" as our reminder that Jesus saves and gives life. Jesus said: "I have come that you might have life and have it to the full."

And last year it was "**Oreos.**" Which means "beautiful" in the Greek and is found in Romans 10:15, "**How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!**"

So today, let's focus on **Milky Way**. The American version of the Milky Way bar is made of chocolate malt nougat topped with caramel and covered with milk chocolate and sold as the Mars bar everywhere else around the world. The Milky Way bar was created in 1923 by Frank C. Mars and was originally manufactured in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The name and taste

were taken from a famed malted milk drink of the day, which was in turn named after the Earth's galaxy, the Milky Way.

Now, let's talk about the actual Milky Way. The **Milky Way** is the galaxy that contains our Solar System. The descriptive "milky" is derived from the appearance from Earth of the galaxy – a band of light seen in the night sky formed from stars that cannot be individually distinguished by the naked eye. From Earth, the Milky Way appears as a band because its disk-shaped structure is viewed from within. In 1610 Galileo first discovered with his telescope that the band of light was actually individual stars. Until the early 1920s, most astronomers thought that the Milky Way contained all the stars in the Universe. But, Edwin Hubble showed that the Milky Way is just one of many galaxies.

The Milky Way is estimated to contain 100–400 billion stars. There are probably at least 100 billion planets in the Milky Way. Our Solar System is located within this disk of heavenly bodies known as the Milky Way. And, the Milky Way is just one of 2 Trillion Galaxies in the known universe!

Again, to remind you, the Milky Way is spinning like a galactic pinwheel at the dizzying rate of 483,000 mph.

And the Bible tells us: **"In the beginning God, created the heavens and the earth."**

Yet when was the last time you thanked God for keeping us in orbit? I'm guessing never! "Lord, I wasn't sure we'd make the full rotation today, but You did it again!" We just don't pray that way, and that is the ultimate irony: we already believe God for the big miracles like they're no big deal. The trick is trusting Him for the little ones, like healing a serious illness, finding Mr/Ms Right, opening a door of opportunity, or getting us out of what seems like insurmountable debt.

Compared to keeping the planets in orbit, how big is your biggest dream? How bad is your worst problem? How difficult is your greatest challenge?

You don't have to look through a telescope to see the miraculous hand of God at work. You can put it under a microscope too. Trillions of chemical reactions are taking place in your body every second of every day – you are inhaling oxygen, metabolizing energy, managing equilibrium, manufacturing hormones, fighting antigens, filtering stimuli, mending tissue, purifying toxins, digesting food, and circulating blood. All the while your brain is performing up to ten quadrillion calculations per second using only ten watts of power. A computer would require a gigawatt of power produced by a nuclear power plant to pull off the same performance.

Yet I know people, and you do too, who say they have never seen God at work...never experienced a miracle. Nothing could be further from the truth. You have never not! You aren't just surrounded by miracles. You are one.

Keep looking under that microscope; things are about to get even more interesting.

If your personal genome sequence (what makes you...you) was written out long-hand, it would be a three-billion-word book. The King James Version of the Bible has 783,137 words, so your genetic code is the equivalent of nearly four thousand Bibles. And if your personal genome sequence were an audio book and it was read at a rate of one double helix per second, it would take nearly a century to put you into words!

Psalm 139:13-14 reads: *You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

You think the Milky Way is fascinating...well so are you! Every moment of every day, we experience the miraculous on both a microscopic and macroscopic scale. Miracles are happening all around us all the time. But the greatest miracle is the one you see in the mirror. There never has been and never will be anyone like you. Of course, that isn't a testament to you. It's a testament to the God who created you. (From Mark Batterson: The Grave Robber, 2014, Baker Books)

The same God who created the Milky Way, which is beyond comprehension in its vastness, is also the same God which created the human body, which is also beyond comprehension! Yet, not only are WE created by God and the world we live in as well, but He deeply cares for each one of us and wants a relationship with each one of us.

In 1935, the slogan of the Milky Way candy bar was "The sweet you can eat between meals." It was then changed to "At work, rest and play, you get three great tastes in a Milky Way." By 2006 the slogan was "Comfort in every bar," and most recently the slogan became "**Life's Better the Milky Way.**"

(Wikipedia)

There is no doubt that life is better the Milky Way, but I don't mean by eating this candy bar each day, I mean by following the one who created the actual Milky Way. And the best way to follow HIM is to feed on Him. How?

1 Peter 2:1-3 (NIV)

2 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. **2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk**, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, **3** now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Say this part with me: "**Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk...**"

God wants us to rid ourselves...quit depending on... a steady diet of the poisons...the junk food of life...things like envy, slander, hypocrisy, deceit and a thousand other things that are bad for us and instead start feeding on real spiritual milk...the things of God that actual nourish our lives! In fact, we are told to CRAVE it. Desire it with all your heart. Life **is** better the milky way....if that milk is spiritual milk. A baby needs milk to grow and survive. Every Christian needs the same nourishment – spiritual milk.

But, I must caution you. As I grew up and moved from being a baby to a boy and a man, I moved on from milk. In fact, from the age of five our bodies start rejecting milk as the sole supplement for growing. We need more nutrients as we age. Yes, indeed. As I grew older, I moved on to meat and potatoes and vegetables. I moved on to solid foods. We're going to eat a lot of solid foods in a minute to prove that we've moved past milk!

But have we moved past milk in our spiritual lives. Are some of us, who have called ourselves Christians for a long time, still babes in Christ? Now, we should not desire to stay in this baby stage. Why? Well think about babies for a moment.

Babies can't feed themselves. Babies cry when they're wet. Babies always want someone to hold them. Babies cry and throw tantrums when they don't get their way. Babies are not responsible and they don't care where they poop, when they poop, and who they poop around. Now, let's just be honest. And babies like to be rocked to sleep, which is exactly what some do when I preach! So, I ask you, do you really want to be a spiritual baby the rest of your life?

God wants us to move on in our spiritual walk and mature and **GROW UP** and start taking in some more solid spiritual food. That's what Peter (1 Peter 2:2) said: ² ***Like newborn babies, crave***

pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may **grow up** in your salvation...

There are times when I want to say to other Christians: "Grow Up." But, there are also times, when someone needs to say that to me! We all need a reminder and a boost from time to time that tells us that we need to grow up and move on from being baby Christians that mature and start sharing what we've learned with others. Teachers not infants. I still need milk to sustain me, but I've learned there is more than milk to help me grow. Listen to what the Hebrew writer said:

Hebrews 5:12 (NIV)

¹² In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

This is not a compliment! It's another way of saying, "some of you are still babies and you need to grow up." Yes, we need spiritual milk every day, but some of us need to quit being babies and being bottle-fed spiritually and grow up!

What do you mean?

I mean: **Grow up in your faith** – trust God more than yourself. Pray for a faith that perseveres, no matter what. Develop a faith that makes you stronger and endures. Someone once said: "Little faith will bring your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul."

Grow up in your focus – focus on Jesus and becoming more like Him. Focus on His word and absorbing it into your life. Focus on your concern for others. Your growth accelerates when you get outside of your own little world and give of yourself to others. Jesus said it best when he described the two greatest commandments. He said:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' (Matthew 22:37-39)

I really believe you can describe spiritual growth in this way. When we are feeding on milk our theme song is: "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so." In our totally dependent on spiritual milk stage, we know that Jesus loves us. But if we are going to grow then we need to go deeper. Then our song becomes: "Have Thine own way Lord, Have Thine own way, thou art the potter, I am the clay, mold me and make me after thy will, while I am waiting yielded and still." OR..."Here's my heart Lord, speak what is true."

So today let's learn this truth. We need to crave pure spiritual milk...choose the **spiritual** milky way. Why? In order to grow up!

But let's note that this candy bar has not only the word, "Milky," but also the word, "Way."

It was Jesus who said: *"I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me."*

When I was in High School (back in the last century) there was a popular slogan among young Christians – "One Way," and you would extend your finger upward during worship – which meant – there is only one way. So you would see this extended finger on bumper stickers and decals and jewelry symbolizing the one way that is found in Christ.

In fact, in the book of Acts, the early followers of Jesus were sought after by Saul – later to be known as Paul. He was seeking these followers to take them prisoner in an effort to destroy the church. The Bible says in Acts 9:2 he was looking for those men or women who belonged to **the Way**.

...and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

We are gathered here today as followers of the Way. We are, in a sense followers of the Milky Way...not the galaxy...not the candy bar...but those dependent on and craving pure spiritual milk which leads us to grow to more meaty truths of God...and as we feed on the things of God, HE leads us in the right WAY.

And no matter where you are in your spiritual journey today...whether a newborn babe in Christ feeding on the milk of his truth or you are a more mature believer feeding at the buffet table of spiritual growth, one thing is for sure...if you are a Christian...we are all walking the same way. In fact, Paul, the same one that pursued followers of the Way and sought to destroy the church before he himself became a Way follower, said this in Ephesians 5:2 –

"...and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

As the slogan for the Milky Way Candy states: Life is better the Milky Way. Well, indeed it is when Jesus is Lord of your life, and you crave the pure spiritual milk which leads to more solid food, and you walk in the way of love as Jesus commanded us.

So today let this candy bar remind us all to: Crave pure spiritual milk that eventually leads us to more solid truths of the Bible and the way of God AND....walk in the way of love...show people the love of Christ by the way you walk and talk and live. Let them see a loving, compassionate, merciful, caring, forgiving Christ at work in your life. If you want to reduce it even further, today's sermon is simply this: Grow up and walk in the way of love.

The Milky Way and the Universe in all of its vastness is beyond comprehension. It shows us the power of God's creative ability. In other words, it is difficult to believe that someone can look upward to the heavens on a moonless night, seeing countless stars and say "there is no God." But, God was really showing off when he made you and me. We are called His treasure. He gave everything by giving Himself through Jesus. He forgives that we might have freedom. He died that we might have life. He created heaven that we might have hope. Psalm 124:8 reminds us: *"Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."*

So, the next time you look upward at night and see a portion of our Milky Way, please take time to praise God for his creative omnipotence and splendor, but do more than that, humbly thank God for the gift of forgiveness, life and hope he has given each of us through Jesus. Because the planets and the moons and the stars and nebulas may take your breath away, but you my friend...are not just another creation of God...you're His child! And there is no greater relationship in all of creation than God's love for His children. Give Him your life today.

Give Him your heart. Say...Here's my heart, Lord! It's not my life, it's yours. I have life because of You. I can breathe because of You. You are hope. You are grace. You're everything! Help me feed on the milk of your truth and walk in your way!

Joy sings: Here's My Heart Lord!