

St. Timothy Presbyterian Church



COURAGE

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Sermons

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Mary, The Woman of Courage

December 21, 2014

Luke 1:26-38

Truth and Acceptance

Today's passage is a little uncomfortable passage. A virgin having a baby. That doesn't sound right. It was difficult, even for Mary, to accept that fact, to accept the uncomfortable truth, and so she asked, "how can this be since I am a virgin how is it possible?", so it was very difficult for Mary to hear this news and very difficult to accept it. But the angel said to her, "Nothing will be impossible with God."

As I was reading this, how could she say that? How could she accept that? Was she a religious fanatic to accept things like that? Or was she mentally not healthy to just accept? "yeah, I'm a virgin, but I'll accept it". Just from this passage, this is really hard to say, what Mary was really like, what kind of person Mary was? No ordinary woman can accept what the angel said even though it was an angel, no ordinary women can accept what the angel said to her, and you know she was a very ordinary woman from a village. There was nothing special about this Mary. The scripture doesn't say anything about Mary. She was simply an ordinary woman. But as I reflect on this person, Mary, I realized that she was not just an ordinary woman. She was a very strong woman. Not only was it difficult for Mary to accept the birth of a person while she was a virgin, even though that was a very difficult, but more difficult thing was to live with the son of God, to raise the son of God and to live with son of God for the rest of her life. It was difficult to be the mother of the son of God. As soon as Jesus was born, her life became very difficult. Until then, she lived a very ordinary life, a comfortable life, but as soon as the Jesus was born, trouble after trouble. The first thing was Herod tried to kill all the babies, so when Joseph, her husband to be and herself had to run away to Egypt and then live in a foreign country, it was trouble after trouble.

Suffering yet Faithful

Then when Jesus was a teenager, it was difficult to really handle this is a teenager boy. Once they went to the temple and Jesus on the way that they realize that their son was gone. So, they went back to temple and Jesus was sitting there with the scribes and teachers and discussing important things or whatever, I don't know what they're talking about, but he said, "did you know if I'm supposed to be in my father's house?" Things like that. How can they handle the kids like that? Not even that, he's too big for his mother to control. He was too big to guide and control, he was always ready to run into trouble. I mean he was the Son of God, but he ran into trouble all the time. People always criticized him, accused him and sometimes even accused Jesus of being crazy and demon possessed. How as a mother, how can you take that? How can you take that when somebody said, "your son is crazy, and your son is demon possessed?" How could Mary, how could a mother take that your child demon possessed and crazy? Mary had to go through all this troubles and difficulties and hardship, you know having a baby as a virgin is just the beginning of the troubles in her life. All throughout her life, she went through so much trouble because of Jesus.

It was hard to be a mother of the son of God. I don't think you'll ever envy that, I think you just want to be the mother of an ordinary person. You don't want to be a mother of the son of God. Then she experienced something that any mother should never experience, she experienced the crucifixion of her own son dying on the cross. She was right there, strong women. John records that, John says "When Jesus died on the cross, one of the seven last words of Jesus as a mother. This is your son, to John, and then John this is your mother". She experienced something that she should never have experienced as a mother. So, Michelangelo painted this a pity and a suffering and sorrow in his sculpture called Pietà, and that is the sculpture Michelangelo made. Her son, her dead son, the corpse she was holding. It was difficult for Mary, the mother to live as a mother of the son of God. So, when Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word". That's not an easy thing to say. It was not a casual thing to say or more, it was a pietistic thing to say, what she said came from the depth of her heart, shows the faith of Mary. She was an ordinary woman, but she became a very special woman because of this faith. "Here am I the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me, according to your word". This statement was her statement for the rest of her life. It was

not just this time she said she lived with that statement, "let it be with being, according to your word I am your servant". That's how she lived for the rest of her life after she made that statement when she received the message from the angel, she lived like that.

How We should Live

Luke, the Gospel writer, the author that saw all that, was all along with Mary. Luke saw what Mary did and saw how Mary lived like that, "Let it be with me according to your servant". Even after Jesus died, Mary was with the disciples and this is how Luke records that. When they had entered the city, this is after Jesus died. They are the disciples. They all went to enter the city. They went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Phil, Thomas and Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon the zealot and Judas son of James. These are 11 disciples. Judas was not there, he already committed suicide. All of them were constantly devoting themselves to prayer together, including Mary, the mother of Jesus. As well as his brothers. Mary's life, how she lived her life, and how she lives her life after even after Jesus died, Mary was a wise woman. She was a humble woman. She was a strong woman. She was a woman of courage. She showed to all of us how we should live, "I am your servant Lord, let me be with you according to your word". That's wisdom, that's how we should live our lives.

That is the best way to live our lives, my friends like Mary, we sometimes experience the uncomfortable truth as Michelle prayed eloquently in the world, there are many mothers who are crying because of the uncomfortable truth that they experience in their lives, and sometimes my friends not only those mothers, but we all sometimes experience the uncomfortable truth about our lives, about us, others around us, things that we don't want happen to us, life is not that easy. Things that we don't like to happen to us. Our situations are too difficult to handle. Our problems are beyond our capacity to deal with and I see many people who don't deal with situations very well.

When these things happen, they get really, really stressed out and they complain and try to manipulate the situation with their shallow understanding of wisdom. They try to manipulate the situation and if

everything doesn't work out, then they give up and they become totally helpless and hopeless. Mary, she experienced the uncomfortable truth. What did she did not want to happen to her? She did not fight that. She was a woman of thinking. She sat down, and she accepted it, "Let it be with me according to your word, I am your servant". When we experience similar situations as Mary, what we need is faith or they need to trust in God and you will see how God will work miraculously. The other day, this man from KSM received really unfair treatment in his work, racism when I heard that, but he resists and forgets. One day he said to himself, "Ok I will give everything to God" and the next day, all the problems were solved. He experienced the miracle of his life and he told me that "Moksanim, I received the best gift, Christmas gift this year" Life's impossible situations.

Nothing is impossible with God who strengthens us. Some of you may go through very difficult problems in your life, don't try to handle with your wisdom and power that work in your lives, and experience and witness the miracle that is that can happen in you. Mary, because of her faith, she allowed the savior, the Messiah to fulfill God's will, without Mary, Jesus would not have done what he could do. She was a wonderful woman, who brought a miracle to the world, who brought the best gift to all of us, and in the end, she never lost her faith in God. She did well as a mother, as a mother of the son of God, and I'm thankful that she did well. She made it possible for the Messiah to work out the salvation for all of us. My friends, Merry Christmas and think about Mary and every faith in every possible situation, don't give up. Let it be with me according to God's will and God will work out for you.

The Lord God Made Them All

January 18, 2015

John 1:43-51

Mystery

What I wanted to talk about today is a little bit of a difficult topic. I'm going to talk about the mystery. I'm going to talk about reasoning. I'm going to talk about how those two are working together. So, it's a difficult topic. The Christian journey is a journey into God and journey into God is a journey into mystery. By nature, journey into God, is a journey into mystery. We don't really know what the outcome will be. We see Phil and Nathaniel in today's story, when you look at it there are a lot of missing holes. Jesus was in the side that Moses talked about and the proverbs talked about and how Nathaniel knew that Jesus was the son of God and the King of Israel. There's no explanation.

They just made a confession. Sometimes the Bible has that when there's a mystery aspect, there is no explanation necessary. But their lives were completely changed after this incident they neither expected nor imagined that their lives would turn out that way. Before they met Christ, they were probably living very normal and ordinary lives. Then all of a sudden, once they met Jesus Christ, their lives turned around completely, and they followed Jesus. In that sense, life is a mystery beyond our control and our power. We cannot always predict our life's outcome. These days I really, really enjoy seeing my grandson, Nolan. I don't have much time to visit them and actually see him, but Josh sends me pictures and video clips. So, my daughter Grace is from Boston, so she came and stayed with us and we sat down and watched the pictures and video clips.

Choice

She said, I can watch this all day, and then cry. Everything is so beautiful. It's wonderful to see your grandson. But while I was asking myself what future is waiting for him? What will he be like in 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40 years later? And I realize that I don't know, it is hidden. It is hidden to us. It is hidden because it is part of our life. We live our lives in

the natures of the known and the unknown. The certain and the uncertain. The revealed and the hidden. Nobody lives with absolute certainty. Nobody should claim that they live with absolute certainty. Philippe and Nathaniel didn't expect at all that their lives would turn out the way it turned out. It was a mystery to them. Yes, it was their choice. But when you look at it and yet it wasn't totally your choice. Don't you feel that sometimes, yes you made a choice, but it wasn't really totally your choice? Life is like that, we think it's our choices, but we realized that it wasn't purely our choices. Life turned out all right, but not necessarily because of our good choices. Some of the times, life turns out in spite of our bad choices. We didn't always make the right choices to make our life good, sometimes life turned out good in spite of our bad choices.

We are thankful to God for that. There is a force that leaves our lives much more powerful than the power of our choice. That's what Philip and Nathaniel experienced in today's scripture passage. Nathaniel was a skeptical person. like most of us. Most people who live in the 21st century is very skeptical. Philip came to him and said, oh I met this great guy he was the one that Moses and the prophets were talking about. It's Wonderful. And then Nathaniel said, "What good comes out of Nazareth?". And Philip's answer is so refreshing. Come and see, come and see. That's the formula of John, come and see don't try to figure out, come and see. You actually have to come and see. What good can come out of Nazareth? That was Nathaniel's prejudice, in the end, he was proven wrong. The real good came from Nazareth, Jesus Christ came from Nazareth, and then ultimately you are the son of God and the king of Israel.

Skepticism

There is another famous skeptical person in the Bible and his name was Thomas. Thomas was another skeptical person. It's interesting, both people came out from John's Gospel. Nathaniel comes out right in the beginning, in chapter one right at the beginning of John's story. Thomas comes out at the end of the story, almost like John was trying to say how a skeptical person became a believer. From the beginning to the end he put those two people right there. After Jesus was resurrected. Thomas wasn't there, so when he was soon there he said, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hand and put my fingers in the mark of the nails and put my hand into his side

I will not believe. Thomas wasn't there, and he said this, "But as soon as he encountered Jesus, he didn't put his finger there. He didn't put his hand in his side. He didn't do any of that". That skepticism evaporated. As soon as he encountered Jesus, the only thing that came out of his mouth was the greatest confession. My Lord and my God. In the entire Gospel, no one ever said that Jesus was going to die. The highest confession was that Jesus was the son of God, but nobody dared to claim that Jesus was God. And from the lips of Thomas, we hear a confession, my Lord, and my God. They both overcame their skepticism when they met Christ. You know, skepticism comes from our intellectual reasoning, but when we encounter the divine, our reasoning stops. That's what it is. When you read the Bible. That's what happens. When you encounter the divine the reasoning stops, and something more powerful than the reasoning takes us over. That's why religion can be very, very dangerous.

Also, religious fanaticism was caused because of this aspect of God. You can justify almost anything in the name of God, and the name of God, they did horrible things. In history and right now we use God to justify their hidden beliefs, their anger, their hatred, and the fear of being powerless. We don't condone that. They simply use God for their purpose. But encountering God is the most beautiful thing. The most beautiful thing that we human beings can experience. It is not something we can figure out or explain. There is such a thing as figuring out God, you can never figure out God.

Reasoning

That doesn't mean we put aside our reasoning. We don't use our reasoning to figure out God, we use our reasoning to understand God deeper. As we encounter the divine, all our reasoning stops. We are simply in awe of God's presence. That's what we have seen today's scripture. When Jesus calls Phillip, Phillip did not try to figure out, he simply understood that he was the one Moses and the prophets were talking about and that was what he communicated to Nathaniel. In the beginning, responded skeptically, but that was before he met Christ. But as soon as he met Christ, he made his confession. He was a son of God and king of Israel.

Being able to reason is the power we human beings have. When we lose it we become very uncomfortable and vulnerable? It is a power to protect us and build our lives. With reasoning, we make our living. With reasoning, we

make our judgment. With reasoning, we say what is right and what is wrong. So being able to reason is very, very important in our lives. When your reasoning is screwed then it becomes a problem because he really drives our lives. With reasoning, you can pretty much control your life. Yes, with reason, we can control our lives', but we cannot experience life with reasoning. You can control it, but we cannot experience God. You can experience life. Life is not to be controlled, life is to be experienced.

God is not to be figured out. God is to be understood. God is not to be controlled. God is to be encountered. God who is controlled is not God anymore. It is an idol that we create for our own convenience. God gave us this greatest gift, reasoning. I think that's a wonderful gift that God gave to us. If he didn't then we would become quite arrogant with our reasoning. It is the greatest power we human beings are proud of, and rightly so.

But we have to understand that this power of reasoning can limit us, blind us, and keep us locked in our own small world. We don't experience the magnitude of life. We don't experience the love and joy of life. We just live with a taste of a little control we make in our lives. As Nathaniel encountered Jesus, he was in awe. He was quite shocked by how deeply Jesus knew about him. And then Jesus said, "Are you surprised only with this?". And then he said an amazing thing. You don't see the greater thing you don't know yet, what that greater thing is. You're just surprised with this. You'll see a greater thing. Jesus really showed what the greater thing about life is, that is what the life journey is all about. As we take the life journey, we will see greater things in life. In that sense, I'm an optimist. I always believed that life will get better.

Reflection

I always believed that everything will work out for the better, and I believe that the present is always better than the past. I have beautiful memories in the past but still right now, the moment I'm living, the present time I am living in is better than the past. We'll see greater things in life. To do that, we need to be opening to fully encounter Christ. Jesus where do you want to take me? If you're with me I will go with you. Jesus, what do you want me to experience in life? I'm scared, but if that's what you want me to experience, I believe to experience that. We have to trust God.

God wants you to experience the most beautiful things in life, but we have to trust him. Our journey is a journey into mystery, our journey is a journey to experience greater things in life. As we meet God our eyes will be opened and see greater things. Jesus said to Nathaniel, heaven will open, but we have to trust in God. With small things that you've created. Don't be bound by it. Don't be scared of going beyond. Don't let your fears stop the journey. Have the courage to take into a deeper level of our living, deeper joy, deeper love, and a deeper sense of justice. In that journey, we will experience that life is wonderful. All things beautiful and bright. Yes, life is wonderful my friends. Don't be scared of taking on this journey. God will be with you and God will take you to the most beautiful place.

Identity and Temptation

February 22, 2015

Mark 1:9-13

Jesus' Five Milestones

There are five major milestones in Jesus' life. Those were baptism, transfiguration, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. These are the five major events that happened in Jesus' life. We saw the transfiguration last Sunday when we reflected that spiritual experience on the mountain top is good, but it is not enough to deal with life's challenges. So, we should ask God not only to give us a wonderful spiritual experience but also at the same time, equip us and empower us to be able to deal with the daily challenges of our lives. So that's what we reflected on. Today, we are looking at Jesus' baptism story, which is another milestone of Jesus' life. And then we see a similar thing going on in this story, as a story of transfiguration. In transfiguration, the disciples saw Moses and Elijah from heaven they earth the voice. But in Jesus' baptism they saw heaven torn apart, the spirit descended like a dove.

And then there was a voice: You are my son, the beloved. With you, I am well pleased. It's a wonderful scene. They experienced a heavenly experience. So wonderful. But right after, the spirit who descended on Jesus for like a dove, now with violent power and force, drove Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted. I mean, they are short passages, Mark just put these two together and he even doesn't talk about temptation, the content of temptation. So, that's why I like Mark, one of my favourite books, but it is short and precise, to the point, but it has a powerful message. It is the gospel that was written first, before Matthew and Mark, and then he describes a right there that when Jesus was experiencing heaven and as soon immediately Jesus was thrown into the wilderness, in the reality of temptation,

and then I realized that that's our life. That is my life and that's your life. When you praise, you feel like you're in a different world. You experience the holiness and the presence of God and everything. As soon as you walk out of this sanctuary, we are faced with temptation of the world. In your everyday living, you are faced with the reality of temptation. Life is a

mix of the good and bad. You cannot always expect the good. You won't always stay on the good. You won't always experience inspiration in your lives and many times you only experience the dark reality of temptation and challenges and difficulties and hardships, and I was thinking about what is temptation? What is the basic core meaning of temptation? Is temptation the power to make you do what you're not supposed to do? Is that what temptation is? A power to make it do what you're not supposed to do?

Life's Temptations

You're on a diet and there's a delicious pizza right in front of you, especially at 11 at night. Should I eat this, or not? Oh, my goodness, right here, I can smell it. I can just take a small slice. Pizza is your temptation. You've decided to do exercise every morning. You'd get up, "Aw, it's too cold! I don't want to go out and walk or run or anything. I just want more sleep. One more hour of sleep.". Sleep is your temptation. It is a power to make you do or you're not supposed to. Mark does not describe the details of Jesus' temptation, but Matthew and Luke do. Do you know the famous story of Jesus' temptation in Matthew and Luke? Satan told Jesus to turn the bread into stone, and then he took him to the temple and said. "Why don't you throw yourself off?". Nothing worked, so he took him to the high mountain and showed him the whole, and he said I'll give you this if you bow to me. That was the temptation that Jesus had. And then I read a few times and then I realized that you nothing to do with the power to do what you're not supposed. Jesus fed 5,000 with only five loaves of bread and two fish. So, Jesus could have easily turned the stone into bread. So, it has nothing to do with the power to make you do what you're not supposed to do. Then what is temptation? And as I read those temptations again and again, one statement, one phrase kind of jumped out at me and that was saying to kept asking Jesus: if you are the son of God. That comes up every time. Satan wanted Jesus to prove himself that he was truly the son of God.

Jesus' Identity

That gave me insight or a clue to understanding the reality of temptation. I've learned that temptation is basically questioning our basic identity. Temptation is questioning my basic identity, who I am, who we are. What was Jesus' biggest temptation? Jesus' greatest temptation was the cross. Cross was his last and final and the greatest temptation. When he was

upon the cross, the people ridiculed him, saying: If you are truly the Messiah, why don't you save yourself? If you're really the son of God, why don't you show to the whole world they you can do that? Why don't you just come down save yourself? You save others, why not just save yourself? Show it! Prove it! About who you are! Let me read an exact quotation: He saved others. He could not save himself, let the Messiah, the king of Israel come down from the cross now so that we may see, and believe. As I read the scripture, Jesus did not do anything to prove himself. He was silent, quiet and he breathed his last breath. That's it. Finished. Jesus did not say "Hey! I can do it!".

He didn't do that. He just quietly died. Strangely after he died, a centurion, seeing all that he said, he said: he was truly the son of God. A centurion. Jesus' identity was identified by a centurion. Jesus did not do anything to improve himself.

Jesus' identity was not what he claimed or what he achieved. Jesus' identity was declared by God and the centurion recognized Jesus' identity. That makes me think. What is my identity? Is my identity what I claim or what I achieve? If my identity is what I claim or what I achieve, I would be living a very tiring life. I'll be always tired, always having to prove myself to other people. "Hey guys, see, this is who I am.". If I cannot do it, I may even force it. I'm may even disguise myself and deceive others. Whatever it is, I want people to see me THIS way. In life, sometimes our identities are attacked. Who we are is attacked. We experience a situation where we feel like we are nobody, worthless, ugly, and undesirable. These days, I don't even want to look at my mirror. "Gosh, when did you get so old?". I don't want even to want to have a picture taken. I think "What happened to your hair?". And I say to myself, I got to take care of my hair, before I stand up in front of people and talk. We are scared of feeling like that. So, we tried to prove ourselves in whatever we do. You want to define who we are. We are smart, funny, powerful, we have attractive, religious, we're special!

Wow. That's tiring. Especially if you're not smart, and you are pretending to be smart. That will get really tiring. Soon our harsh reality hits us and makes us feel that we cannot hold on to what we like to define ourselves with any longer, and we feel uncomfortable with the feeling that we are losing the grip on our lives. My friends, when you're in the moment of trial and temptation, if you can recognize that all the identities that you like to paint yourself with are false identities. If you can recognize that it in the

hour of temptation and trial, then you will come out of temptation stronger, bigger, greater. But if you don't recognize that even in your temptation and trial, it will come out smaller and more miserable. At the baptism, God declared that Jesus was the son of God. That was God's declaration. It was not something Jesus achieved, or Jesus had to prove. The identity of Jesus was the gift of God, Hallelujah. Your identity is God's gift. You are a child of God. You are sons and daughters of God. That's a gift That's what God gave you. That's not something that you achieved.

God's Gift of Identity

When we go through difficult times, sometimes we wonder about who we are. We have doubts about who we are and what we can do. We lose sometimes confidence about ourselves, but let us not forget, that you are the beloved sons and daughters of God, and that doesn't change. That doesn't change. This is what Isaiah says: But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. Who's are you? You are God's. Our identities are not what our circumstances gave to us. Your achievements did not give you your identity. Your identity is basically God's gift for you. Our identities are not what we made up arbitrarily, but it's God's gift, and that never changes, so we need to continuously and constantly go back to that basic identity and starting from there, all other small identities just come and go. The most important identity that you need to hold on to is that you are God's precious child. It was a busy day yesterday. After early morning prayer at 6:30, we had a session meeting at 8:00, and 9:30 we had BOM, and at 12:00 there was a wedding. After the wedding, everybody left. I was all alone in this church, in my office, and all of a sudden, this question came to me: Can you do it? Can you do what you want to do? Or is it unrealistic fantasy or dream. I lost all confidence. I even lost the taste for ministry for the moment. Do it over, and over, but no change. And then I went back to that basic identity. I am God's precious child and God has called me and God called me to persevere, to continue. When I went back to the basic identity again, I could have confidence and then I finished the sermon yesterday. And I finished the sermon five minutes before the reception.

When you face challenges of your life, when your identities, crushed, demolished, whatever that may be, as a musician or as a professional, whatever it is, when that is crushed, there is a stronger identity underneath:

that you are a precious child of God. Go back to that and you can build yourself back again.

Setting Your Mind on Divine Things

March 1, 2015

Mark 8:31-38

Gospel of Mark

Today's message is the core of the Christian message and the core of the Gospel. This is probably the most important text in the whole Bible. As I said before, Mark is simply amazing. The Gospel Mark is traditionally understood as the memoir of St. Peter. Mark was following around Peter and he recorded the Gospel message, remembering what Peter said. Ultimately, it is a very simple book.

It is a great book. Short, but it gets to the point. It is precise but clearly presents the Gospel. There are only 16 chapters, but it's very clearly defined into 2 sections, both of 8 chapters. In the first eight chapters, he is talking about the identity of Jesus. In the second eight chapters, he is talking about the suffering of Jesus Christ. It is a very interesting combination. The identity of Christ and suffering of Christ. The passage that you read today was in Chapter 8:27-38, and that is the core. That is where the transition begins. Up to chapter eight, Mark is trying to establish who Jesus is. And from chapter eight onwards, he's talking about the mystery of Jesus' suffering. Why is this a mystery? Because it is a scandal. The Messiah, the hero, saviour. That Messiah suffered, was rejected, and died a cruel death. Can you accept that the Messiah was not powerful enough like Superman, who comes and saves humanity, but rather a Messiah who suffered, was rejected and died? Can we accept that kind of Messiah? Can that Messiah save us from all our troubles and our problems? People wondered, and we also wondered. Can that kind of Messiah save us?

We are going to explore what Mark is trying to communicate. The climax is the confession of St Peter. Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they replied "Elijah," and others said as a prophet to the people.

Jesus, The Messiah

And then Jesus asked Peter, "Who do you see that I am?" And Peter who is always fast in responding. Peter came out and said, "You are the Messiah. You are the Messiah." What is Peter doing? He's nailing the point. The first eight chapters are talking about the identity of Jesus Christ, and from Peter's mouth, comes "You are the Messiah!". He did a great job in concluding and proclaiming who Jesus truly was. Seeing that Peter understood Jesus' identity, Jesus started revealing the mystery of what would happen to him. And he said, the son of man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the scribes and be killed. And after three days, rise again. At the first part, it was about Jesus' identity, but as soon as Peter said, "You are the Messiah!", Jesus told all his disciples to be quiet. When he started talking about his suffering, rejection.

Peter did not like what Jesus said, so Peter took Jesus aside. Peter is about the same age as Jesus. Even though Peter was his disciple, Peter was also a friend. Peter actually got upset with what Jesus said. He just said, "You are the Messiah!" And Jesus talked about his suffering, rejection, and death. So, Peter said to Jesus "Don't say that. Don't say that." The scripture said Peter rebuked Jesus. So, Peter would not have said "O Lord, please do not say that." No. "Don't say that. Don't say things like that. You're ruining it! You are ruining your reputation, you're ruining what we are trying! Don't say that."

What did Peter not like? I wonder. What did Peter not like? Peter did not like defeat. To him, what Jesus said was similar to a defeated mentality. Suffering, rejection, and death? They all implied the defeat of the Messiah in Peter's mind. In other words, "Jesus, you're wrong, don't say that.". Peter wanted to correct Jesus. Jesus, in the same way, rebuked Peter and said: "Get behind me, Satan." It was a strong word to his friend, his disciple. "Get behind me, Satan." But Jesus had to use it because Peter's thinking was everything what Jesus tried to fix. That's why right after, Jesus said, "For you are setting your mind not on divine things, but on human things." It was not just an innocent mistake Peter made. Jesus wanted to go one way and Peter wanted to go a totally different way? Look at it very carefully. We've been meditating on these things. There is the identity of Jesus for the first eight chapters and Peter was correct. But in the second part when Jesus started talking about suffering, rejection, and death, Peter did not accept.

Peter did not like it. When you look at these two, what are you reminded of? Are you remind of anything? Why would Jesus use the word "Satan".?

Rejection, Death and Suffering

Do you remember the temptation story? When Satan tempted Jesus what did he say? If you are the son of God, then do the wonderful things such as turning stone into bread and jumping down from the temple. That's what the son of God is. The first part mentions, if Jesus is the Messiah, then prove it. But Jesus did the exact opposite of that. "I will suffer, I will be rejected, and I will die," but Peter did not like that. Peter followed exactly what Satan was trying to do, and that's when Jesus said, "Satan, get behind me." To Jesus, suffering, rejection and death were not signals of defeat. Satan tells us we should try to avoid suffering, rejection, and death at all cost. That those are bad things. Suffering, not worth it. Rejection, why not be popular and be accepted by everyone? If everyone rejects you, then you are dead. Try to avoid rejection as much as possible! Death is not what we want!

But Jesus is saying, do not be afraid of suffering, do not be afraid of rejection and to not be afraid of death. Rather, you should embrace your suffering and that is the important truth. In verse 34: "if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." What does that mean? This is a very popular saying. We all know if anybody wants to become my followers, let him deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Take up their cross and follow me. We hear that so many times, but we don't understand what it means. Is Jesus saying, "If you to follow me, suffer?" Is that what Jesus is saying? "Take up your cross and follow me! You can not have a big house! If you want to follow me, suffer!" Is that Jesus is trying to say? "Take up your cross," is what Jesus is saying. He's not asking you to suffer. What he's asking you is to not be afraid of suffering! That's what Jesus is saying. Taking up your cross means to embrace your suffering. People seem to be scared of suffering, rejection and death. They are scared of them. "What if everybody leaves me? What if nobody likes me? What if I lose my job? What if my children suffer? What if I have a terminal disease and I faced death?"

People are scared of suffering and death, so they run away from these things. We need these things. They think they're defeated. They try to save themselves from these things at all costs. You come to realize that you can

never save yourself from these things. Suffering, rejection, death. The more you try to save yourselves, the more you become weak and the more you become scared. You tried to run away from these things, but they chase after you like a shadow. So, you've lived your life for awhile forgetting about rejection, forgetting about death, and then turn around and it is right there waiting. Instead of disappearing from you, like a shadow it follows you around. You are trying to run away, but in the process, you're losing yourself. You tried to run away from these things, but ultimately you will lose. Jesus said a very important truth: "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will save it." If you try to save your life to avoid your suffering, you will lose the life they tried to save.

If you are willing to suffer for the sake of the Gospel and Jesus Christ and you lose your life, in the end you will save your life. You're trying to save yourself from suffering, rejection and death, but you'll lose. Remember, in your life, you're trying to save yourself from suffering, rejection, and death, you will lose. You'll be imprisoned in your own fear, anger and sadness. But if you say to yourself, turn around and face your suffering, rejection and death. "OK suffering, come! I am ready to suffer! I'm ready to be rejected! I'm ready to die!" All of a sudden, suffering, rejection and death, they no longer have a grip on us. They don't have any power to control us anymore. But as long as you try to avoid them, then they will be continuously in power over you. When you turn around and face suffering, death and rejection, then they will lose power.

Face Your Fears

When I was teenager I was very small and there was this big guy. He was a bully. He scared the heck out of me. Everyday, I would go to school and as soon as he appears, I ran away. I don't know how many days I did this, but my life was miserable. One day, I was angry with myself. I said to myself, "I'm going to face this guy." So, he came and started hitting me and all that. I turned around and I faced him.

And then he was scared. He didn't know where this courage came from. I just turned around and faced him. "You want to beat me, beat me." I didn't even have to fight and after that he left me alone. That is the truth. In your life. If you're scared of suffering, rejection, and death and you constantly run away from them, you will die. You will become a slave to them. But

when you face them, they will lose that power against you. You can face those things because with the God, we can persevere our suffering. With God, suffering will produce perseverance, character, and even hope. That is real power. With you alone, you can't do that. But with God, suffering cannot destroy you. Suffering even produces hope. With God, we can face our rejection because Jesus said, "I will never abandon you." Even when the world rejects you, God will always be with us and embrace us. With God, we can face our death because Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life, those who believe in me, even though they die, they will live with God." We can now face suffering, rejection and death.

These three things will always be a part of your lives. When you graduate from high school, it will still be there. When you finish university, they will still be there. When you get married, they will still be there. Even when you're 60, 70, 80 years old, suffering, rejection and death will be always part of your lives. We cannot run away from them and even if we wanted to do so, it will never leave us as long as we live. As we try to run away from them, you become weaker. Apart from suffering, don't try to build your own joy and happiness. Apart from rejection, don't try to build your identity. Apart from death, don't try to build your life. Find joy in the midst of suffering. Find your identity in the midst of rejection. Find life in the midst of death. When you are ready to suffer, ready to be rejected, and ready to die, you'll be amazed by that power and it will empowers you. And you'll be free from fear, and you will have an abundant day. Today is March 1st. For Koreans, March 1st is a very important day. That's when they all rose up against Japanese imperialism, when Korea was part of Japan. The people had no power, no weapons, no nothing. But thousands and thousands of people came out and stood up against the oppression, against Japan's imperialism. They fought against it. How do they do it? They said, "If I perish, I perish."

I'm ready to perish. If I perish, I perish. When Martin Luther King Jr. started his demonstrations, they had the same attitude. If I perish, I perish. And they were able to come out and fight against injustice. In your life, if you can say that, if I perish, I perish, you will live. But if you say, I'm scared of perishing, then you will die. That's what the Christian Gospel is all about. If I perish, I perish. I'm not going to be a slave to money, and I'm not going to be slave of fame, I'm not going to be a slave to the comforts I enjoy. If I perish, I perish. Then your life will come alive.

Let God Control You

May 31, 2015

John 3:1-16

Living a Reflective Life

Last week I had a visitation from one of our church members. She told me that she had tried to fit God into her life but now she tries to fit her life into God. That was a pretty profound statement. What does it mean to be a Christian? Being a Christian, I realized, is not about living a thoughtless life just full of activities and doing things. The Christian life is very much a reflective life. It's about asking, 'What am I doing?' and 'How is it connected to God?'. Whatever is happening in my life, whatever emotion that I go through, you kind of reflect on it and then understand God better and, as a result, your life better. I think that's what the Christian life is all about. Christian life is not just about doing good things and being full of activities, the Christian life is very much about leading a reflective life. Spiritually you reflect about your life in that way. It does not necessarily mean the Christian is a better person than the non-Christian, but you continuously reflect about what God wants to do and what God is doing in your life. So that reflective aspect of life is very much ingrained in Christian life and very much a part of life.

I saw that woman living a true Christian life. She's continuously reflecting on whatever is happening in her life with God. And then she found this kind of profound statement: I used to try to fit God into my life, but now I realized that I should fit my life to God. And she has realized the secret, the truth about life. I think that's what a Christian life is. You try to fit yourself in God because that's what it means to be born again.

Maybe the Christian life is simple. You used to be at the center and then you try to even use God and fit God into your life, but after you are born again, you truly understand God's theory. You try to have God in the center and then you fit your life into God, that's what it means to be born again. Being born again does not make you a totally different person or a fanatic. Being born again is a reorientation of your thinking. You don't put yourself first anymore, you put God first. That is the criteria, it is simple as that. So, let us look at our life, do I put God first or do I put myself first? Can I really create myself being a Christian when I put myself first before God? Jesus

taught us this interesting and ironical truth. This is what scripture says: the more you control your life, the more you lose control over it. The more you try to find yourself, the more you will lose yourself. Rather if you lose yourself, figuratively speaking, then you'll find yourself. I think that's amazing, truly amazing. That's what I find in myself. The more I try to find myself, the more I lose myself. But when I forget about myself, I end up finding myself.

We Cannot Control Life

Life is not in my control, it's a simple fact. It's not in my control, and that's what Jesus kept telling us. To Nicodemus, he said this about a person being born again (John 3:8): "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes to. So, it is with everyone who was born of the Spirit". Jesus taught us the truth about life. You go out into the field and then you feel the wind and think, oh, the wind comes from the north. You hear the sound of it and you feel the direction of the wind, but you cannot control the direction of the wind. You don't even try to control the direction of the wind. I wonder how many times we have tried to control the direction of the wind of our life. We are very clear about the fact that we cannot control the direction of the wind, but I'm not sure whether we're truly clear about whether we can control the direction of the wind or not. And then sometimes we try to control the wind of our life. I think trying to control the wind of our life is an illusion. The faster you wake up from that illusion, the faster you will find joy and freedom.

I do believe that there are two different kinds of order in life. The order we bring in our life by trying to control it is very different from the order God brings to our life when we surrender ourselves to God. The order we create for ourselves is very rigid, limited, and sometimes suffocating. When we're younger, that order was okay because it makes life safe and controllable. But as you become older, that order becomes suffocating. Rather than helping you feel safe, it inhibits you. You cannot be satisfied with the order that you create for yourself. The order that God brings to us is open, limitless, and liberating. Life is like this-- first you start with order and then that order gets destroyed, then you bring in another order and then that order get destroyed, and so on. We cannot just choose one order and let it just fit our life continuously until we're done because there is no growth, there is no liberation. The essence of life is always the old life perishing,

and then discovering a new order. The order we create is rigid, but the order God creates is open, limitless, and liberating.

Resilient, Spiritual Life

The order we create for ourselves will be shattered by the hardships that hit our life. Strangely, the order that God brings to us when hardships hit our life enables us to somehow find a new shape. It molds our life into a different way and a new order. There are two orders that express strength. One is hard, the other is resilient. The real strength of a Christian life or spiritual life is rather resilient than hard. When something is hard, and the pressure hits it, it sustains for a while but when more pressure hits it, it breaks. But resilience is like when the pressure hits you, it goes down, comes back up again, goes down and comes back. It never breaks. I think the Christian life, or spiritual life, has the strength of resilience.

Life in the spirit has tremendous freedom and yet tremendous resilience. When you build your life with your own strength, you have no choice but to build a small life. No matter how big you are, you are very small compared to God. The kind of life we build with our own strength is one where we have no choice but to live a small life. That life's future is precarious. But with the spirit, your future is unknown and yet you're in the good hands of God.

Let Go of Struggles

My friends, work hard and live diligently but don't try to control your life. Let the spirit guide you. Let the spirit mold you. Let the spirit shape you. You'll find a new dimension of order. When you surrender and let the spirit guide you, all of a sudden, you'll be taken to another level and another dimension of joy. You will struggle with life; how can we live without struggle? Every day's a struggle, every week is a struggle. Everyday something else happens. We cannot live without struggle, but I hope that your struggle is not the struggle that tries to hold onto something that you cannot hold, that's a meaningless struggle.

Let your struggle be a struggle that you can let go of. I know some of our members have financial problems, they struggle so much. If they tried to hold onto something that they cannot hold onto, then that person would perish right now. Let it go. Let go of that grudge, let go of that hatred. If you

don't let go, you can never forgive. Jesus said, forgive each other 70 times 7 - endlessly. Sometimes you're worried about your children, you must even let that go. I've experienced that in my own children, I had a moment of strong uncertainty about their future. I remember I said, "I leave them in Your hands". Let go and surrender to the greater power of God who brings wonderful things to your life. Then you will find peace and see the Kingdom of God.

Experience the Kingdom of God

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Very truly, I tell you can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above". When you let the spirit control your life, you can see the beauty of life, the joy of life, the freedom of life, and you'll see the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not a place nor a time, the kingdom of God is God's reign. When you completely surrender yourself to God to God's hands, that's when the kingdom of God gets established in your life. I think that's the truth that Jesus talks about. You have tremendous desire to control - just like children, so scared.

Why don't you let go? That's what it means to grow up. Let us experience how God will lead you, and that will definitely be better than what you experience. You will be able to experience tremendous joy, freedom, and vision. Life has to open up, don't close it. The Holy Spirit can burst it open so that you come out confidently. You can live out your life fully and abundantly. That what life is. Life is to be celebrated. Life is to be enjoyed. Life is to do something you truly enjoy. Life is to discover God's amazing plan for all of you.

Reflection

Let us truly let the Spirit of God come upon us, melt us, mold us, fills us and use us. We need to surrender ourselves and let go of the things we hold onto because of our fear. Let us have the opportunity to let go of the things we so tightly hold onto and let the Spirit control you, guide you and lead you.

And Perseverance Again

November 8, 2015

Galatians 6:7-10

Living my Life

Today I'd like to reflect with you on certain aspects of life. St Paul said, "do not be deceived". And last week we meditated on Paul's life. Paul had deceived himself for all his life. He really thought that he was living a good life, but you know, he was just reacting and responding to people's kind of, a reaction to him. So, he thought that, okay, this kind of life is a good life. So, he lived that life and it. But spirituality is just coming to yourself coming to your naked self. That's what spirituality is. Most people are too scared to come to ourselves because we have a lot of weaknesses and shortcomings and ugly things, so we don't really come to ourselves. So, we hide it so that people don't see that, and people react to us with attraction. So, without realizing it, we are deceiving ourselves.

Paul did that same thing in his own culture during his time, whatever people admired was different from what we admire, but he did all the things that people admired and then he thought that he was living a really good life. And then he met Christ and all of a sudden, he came to himself and then realize that, hey I didn't see myself deep within, and then I was deceiving myself, and when he discovered himself as naked itself, that was what he found. And I share with you, "I do not understand my own actions for I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate". Wow. What a revelation, I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate", that's kind of a conflict that we all go through.

Sometimes we don't understand our own actions and we should not deceive ourselves as a human being. Then you're not living your life. You're living somebody else's life. I want to live my life, you know, I don't want to live somebody else's life. I don't want to live my life to please other people. That doesn't mean that I just want to live to please myself, that's not what I'm saying. I want to live my life, authentic life. Whatever it is, it may not be perfect, but it's my life. I want to claim back my life, not somebody else. In the beginning, there was a difficulty I tried to live my life

and then they tell me, "Oh, you're a minister. You're supposed to do this and that". No, I don't want to do that. Right? I want to live my life.

I think ministers should live the most authentic life, as a minister. So, we shouldn't deceive ourselves. Who you are, who we are, both strengths and weaknesses, our bodies are very honest. For example, when you eat irregularly and unhealthy food and don't do any exercise, soon, your body will tell you, this is what's going on. The body's very honest. You cannot deceive your body and our spirit; our soul is honest too. Our soul is not really something material. The soul is beyond your physical body. What gives you meaning and joy in life. That's what soul is. Just by having a body, you can not experience joy and meaning and. The soul is there. It's invisible but it is there to enjoy the fulfillment of life. The soul is not that kind of thing. Soul is invisible and immaterial but gives you the joy.

What do you think?

You know when God created heaven and earth creation story, actually what is really important is the last day, last day is not the day of rest, It's not just a day of rest. Last day he created two things. One blessing, the other sanctification. In other words, he created all the material things on the last day, he sanctified all these material things that those things may come alive. Same thing, our body. Our body may be good, but when our soul is not good, our life cannot be enlivened. So, if you don't take care of your soul, then your life cannot, even if you're healthy physically, your life cannot really enjoy the freedom, joy, and meaningfulness and abundance. You know, we know this story very well, a disciple, a disciple came to his master, the master told him and seeing him, "hey, there's a war within you between worldly desire and your desire for God" and a disciple asked which one will win and the master said, "whatever you feed that will win, whatever you feed". If you continuously feed worldly desire that will win. If you feed godly desire, desire for God, that will win. That's why Saint Paul said in verse seven, "do not be deceived. God is not mocked for you reap what you sow". whatever we constantly think about that will shape who I am. thinking is very important. Whatever you think about all the time that will shape who you are, so whatever we feed will grow and win. So, in verse eight, Paul said, "if you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh, but if you sow to the spirit, you will reap eternal life from the spirit". So, if you are continuously, think about negative things, you'll become a negative person. If you continuously think about dark things you become, your life

will become dark. when you're continuously judging other people's weaknesses and shortcomings and all that, then you will become a judgmental person. Whatever you think will shape who you are.

We say that what you eat is what you are, but actually what you eat is not what you are. What you think is what you are. Whatever you think continuously, that makes you who you are. Paul said in another letter "finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there's any worthy of praise, think about these things". Think about these things. Think honourable, beautiful, godly, pure. These things, positive things, things we think about when everything was wrong, you still think about and everything will be all right. Things will turn out all right. If you're continuously think, you become a very positive person. I do believe that life is good, and life is beautiful. If life is not good and life is not beautiful, why do you live? If life is not good, why do you live? If life is not beautiful, why do you live?

Rinse and Repeat

I do believe that life is good, and life is beautiful, and I have to continuously think about that and I think people are beautiful. All of you beautiful, even though you have shortcomings, I think you're a beautiful. If I do not think you're beautiful, why am I here? Right? we think about these people are beautiful, but if you start thinking that these people are all ugly, then all your relationships will go wrong. We have to continuously think about good things. hope. when you always hope for and meditate on beautiful life, your life will become beautiful, but the important thing is constantly repetition. Just because of your exercise, your body will not get better any better. Just because you had healthy food for one meal, your health will not be restored. Continue. make a habit. That's why Bruce Lee said this, "I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times".

Whatever you do continuously, if it is an important thing, then make a habit. Make repetition, continuous repetition. Spiritual journey is creating these repetitions. Spiritual journey is finding good habit, and then you keep doing that. We have to make a good habit of living a spiritual life. if health is important, then make a habit of doing exercise. If a deep connection with God is important, we make a habit of doing prayer and meditation. If your

understanding of the truth is important, we make a habit of the study of studying the word of God. If you keep doing that, you will learn about the truth. Even the will of God you cannot understand the will of God. understanding god's will it will not come overnight, but when you continuously tune yourself into God's will, then ultimately, you'll be able to hear God's will. you know, as much as we try to make changes, sometimes we get frustrated and disappointed because change does not happen easily and fast. That's the nature of change. Change never happens easily. Change never happens. Fast change that happens fast, may not be real change. The nature of change is never fast and never easy. I do believe that change is always possible, but the nature of change is always slow, always difficult, always invisible. change is invisible. You don't see change within you. Other people see the change in you.

Sowing seeds

Paul said, "Whenever you sow you reap", and if we take that negatively, we think that if you commit sin, you'll be punished. Whatever you sow, simple things, you will reap the punishment. We look at it only negatively. We are good at doing that, but that's not really what Paul is saying. Let us consider another letter of Paul what he said about sowing and reaping is a first Corinthian chapter 15, 42 to 44. So, it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. It is sown a physical body. It is raised a spiritual body. If there is this physical body, there is also a spiritual body". we have a lot of contradiction within us because we are weak. We know they're whatever we sow will reap, and yet we don't sow beautiful things because we are weak.

It's not because we don't know it, but because we are weak, but we experienced God's grace who raises the opposite of what we sow. we sow the perishable that God raised the imperishable. I do believe that that is God's grace. You reap whatever you sow. I don't think Paul is saying you will get a consequence of sin. Well, I think that his promise, if you sow justice, you don't see it fulfilled right away, but ultimately, you'll see justice being done. when you sow beautiful thing in your life, it will not be wasted. ultimately you will reap the beautiful things in your life. I think that is a promise of God, so to not get discouraged, let us sow what is beautiful in your life? Ultimately, you'll see the fruit of it. Even unbelievers, they do that kind of thing. Lead believers, we never give up. We never get disappointed.

We'll keep going, keep sowing the seed of beauty and ultimately the pod will be able to reap. I think that's a life lesson for all of us today.

The Towel and the Cross

November 15, 2015

Mark 10:35-45

The Request of James and John

³⁵ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” ³⁹ They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

⁴¹ When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. ⁴² So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

The world was shocked on Friday by the attacks in Paris killing 129 innocent people and many injured. They're going about their regular life, enjoying the concert, watching the soccer game and having dinner and drinks in restaurants and bars. They were totally unprepared for this kind of a violent act. Paris is a beautiful city. It is a beautiful city, but it is a really destroyed. Human spirit was destroyed. We were just there, 12 of us last year, in Paris. Same thing could happen to all of us. As Obama said, the attack was not just on people in Paris, but on humanity. Once again, we are forced to doubt whether there is any goodness left in humanity. Many of us lost faith in humanity. Now people will be more in fear. I read a New York Times and this guy went to see Aladdin show in the afternoon and he heard a sound and all of a sudden, he was alarmed. We cannot even enjoy the

show, safely, freely, we'll be always surrounded by the possibility of tragedy. Fear. Now people will be more self protective. Borders are being closed down.

Is life all about self-serving? I wonder. Has humanity become so downgraded that the only thing that we care about is self serving and self protection? To serve ourselves, we don't care about others. As a matter of fact, we don't care about anything else, but ourselves? I realize that this is not something new. Many of us care only about ourselves. Was it like during Jesus' time. No. You look at today's scripture, we also see the self-serving attitude of the disciples. Just before this passage, Jesus talked about how he will be delivered into the hands of leaders and he'll be persecuted and then he'll die in Jerusalem, but the disciples did not hear. All they cared about was themselves, so they couldn't really hear Jesus. When you're so surrounded with yourself, you can't hear anything. James and John came to Jesus and said to him, teacher we want you to do for us, whatever we ask of you, look at this passage, very careful to reflect on it. We want you to do for us whatever we ask of you. The request itself is already self serving. How many people have this attitude towards God? God, I want you to do for me, whatever I asked you.

God become simply someone I can use to get what I want. How different that is from Jesus' attitude, Jesus said, this is what I want. What do you want? That's what you. That's what Jesus prayed in the ceremony. He didn't say, God, just give what I want. ISIS calls this terrible act as what Allah wants. Not only in Paris, on Thursday, 30, some people died. Same Group, same massacre. Whatever happened in Lebanon or in Paris is act of God. Religious fanaticism. There is no room in Christian belief. We don't believe in this kind of religious fanaticism. Any kind of fanaticism, we reject. People are so self serving that they will use anything to do whatever they want. If it is necessary, they'll even use God. James and John asked Jesus to grant us to sit one at your right hand and one at your left in your glory. That was what they ultimately wanted. The seat of glory. Another self-serving attitude. I wonder these days, is there anybody who goes beyond self serving attitude? I mean, there are only two seats in glory on Jesus right in and left hand. If two brothers, if one family takes them, all of them, whatever other disciples. Where do they sit?

So, the other disciples. What did they say? This is what they said. When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. I read

from Facebook, Barbara put up a beautiful poem by Ernest Hemingway and there was a reply and this guy said "Fear brings anger. Anger brings hatred. Hatred brings suffering. How true. Self serving attitude will bring hatred, and anger, and suffering.

Do we have no choice but to be self serving? Our culture has become like that? Do we have no choice but to be self serving? I don't believe in that. I don't think life is all about our agendas being served, even at the cost of sacrificing others. I don't believe in that. I still believe in humanity. I still believe that there are people who serve others. Jesus taught us real ideology, not crooked ideology of self serving. We are not going to bow down to their fear tactics.

This is what Jesus taught us. The son of man came not to be served, but to serve. Jesus, the son of man did not come to be self serving, but to serve others and he said to give his life as a ransom for many. Even though it meant sacrifice for himself, he will serve. I hope that we don't bow down to their threat. Jesus' teachings are totally the opposite of self serving attitude. That is Christian attitude. Self serving attitude will bring about division, conflict, hatred and violence. Two disciple's self-serving attitude brought anger in ten other disciples St Paul saw the secret about peace and harmony and St Paul said, self serving attitude would never bring about peace and harmony. I guarantee your self-serving attitude will never bring about peace and harmony, whether it's at home, or with friends, as a group, church, community or society or globally. Self serving attitude will not bring about peace and harmony. This is what Saint Paul said: For he is our peace, Jesus Christ is our peace in his flesh. He has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall. That is the hostility between us. Paul saw that it was possible only through self sacrificing cross and then in 15, he said. I paraphrased it, a part of it. Through the cross, he reconciled both groups to God by putting to death, that hostility, through the cross.

As long as the humanity repeats the self-serving history, there will be no peace and harmony in this world. They will never be able to find John Lennon's imagination. Imagine all the people living life in peace. This is what Jesus taught us. You know that, among the gentiles, those whom they recognize, that their rulers lorded over them and their great ones are tyrants over them, but it is not among you. Everybody else may live like that but not you! It is not among you, but whoever wishes to become great

among you must be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. Jesus taught us that self serving attitude is not what the human should live with. That is sin. That is pathetic sin. We are to serve one another, not just Christians, the human humanity, all human beings should serve one another. That is our life. That is how to save the humanity. That is how to save all of us. That is the secret of living in peace and harmony. Cross and towel are two powerful symbols of Christianity. The Cross represents self sacrifice, and the towel represents not self serving, but serving other people. At the last supper, after eating the meal, Jesus wanted to wash the feet of the disciples and after that he dried them with the towel.

By doing that, Jesus showed the true discipleship. I hope that, and I pray that, and I have confidence that St Timothy will bring about surfing people. St Timothy will fight against self serving attitude,

and we'll be the servants of God. From small things, we need to practice that. I guarantee that your life will be much, much happier. When you remain as self serving attitude, your life will become more and more and more miserable. But when you start adopting the self serving, then you'll life will become happier and happier and happier. I guarantee that. This is a song, a beautiful song, and I hope that we can all sing together. I don't know, this may be a new song for you, but it's a very simple song, but the words are so beautiful.

A moment of prayer for the innocent lives taken away in Paris and in Lebanon, the family, friends. Let us really ask God to heal their broken hearts and let us pray that we may not lose our courage. We may not bow down to the fear. Let us pray.

What Was Peter Thinking?

April 18, 2016

Matthew 14:22-33

Beyond the Surface

Three things we wish for when we pray are to see God more clearly, love God more clearly, and to follow God. Sometimes the way we look at the scripture is very limited, and I think that is a problem of modern society. We don't know the scripture very well. We are believers, we are Christians and yet we don't understand the scripture and our way of reading the scripture is very much elementary in a way. We still have a Sunday school mentality a that's how we treat the scripture. We read it in that way, so we don't really get the depth from the scripture. We still think that scripture is an archaic document, which was written 2000 years ago. That is true, but it's not just archaic document. We believe that it is a living word of God and yet we just treat it as an archaic document or like a moral code or a manual that we just read it and follow. We don't really get deeper into the message of the scripture. We don't go beyond what's written on the surface without understanding the meaning and implication of the text. We lack imagination and we lack creativity. So, we read the scripture, but we don't really read it in depth.

For example, in the scripture passage, all we can think about is about the question of miracle. Jesus performed the miracle of calming the storm and walking on the water, and so we only look at it in that way. Then next question is, can a human being walk on water? Some religious person was say, "yes, of course Jesus can walk on water", and some scientific skeptics will say, "how can a human being walk on the water? I won't accept that story". The person with the religious piety will say, "I accept the story". That's it. Beyond that, there's nothing. I don't think Matthew was simply interested in telling us that Jesus performed a miracle by walking on the water or calming the storm.

What was Peter Thinking?

I think there is a deeper message that Jesus wanted to get across and a message that Matthew wanted to get across. As you look at the scripture

today, it was Jesus who told the disciples to go into the boat and go out into the lake. Then in the lake they faced a ferocious storm. When you look at the scripture this is what it said, "immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side". It was Jesus who told them to go into the lake. Late a night, at 3 am, in the pitch dark, they were in the lake, and they were struggling because of the storm. And then they saw a man, a kind of human being walking on the water towards them. Then they said in fear 'It's is a ghost!'. That's a natural response because when you see a man in the darkness walking on the water without a boat, what else can you conclude? And also, Jewish people, they all thought that the place a for ghosts is in the sea. So, all the ghosts were captured within the sea and they automatically assumed that it must be a ghost.

The real story, however, was about Peter. Jesus said to all the disciples "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Jesus said to take heart, be courageous, be strong, and do not be afraid. And Peter's response was strange. He said, Lord, if it is you call me to come to you on the water. Why did he ask that? There's a storm and it is pitch dark. Everybody was scared, and they are really struggling for survival. And they could say, "please save us!". That's a natural response. And then a Peter said, "Lord, command me. Call me to come to you". That was a very strange response.

What was Peter thinking at that moment? Was he trying to show off? I don't think showing off was in his mind. I mean, he's busy surviving. He didn't try to show off. Was he tests trying to test Jesus? No, you don't test somebody when you're at the risk of death. I don't think so. I think when Jesus said, 'it is, I take heart', something happened within Peter. The scripture doesn't record that there's not enough space for the scripture writers to write everything. So, he didn't write it, but something happened within Peter's mind at them moment is almost like an 'a ha' moment. His eyes opened when he saw Jesus and when he heard Jesus say 'it is I, take heart. Be Courageous. Do not be afraid'. As soon as he heard that his eyes opened, and something happened within him. It was a divine presence that he encountered and experienced at the moment.

Ego Eimi, it is I

The expression "it is I" is a very interesting expression in English. In English it is "It is I", but in Greek it is an *ego eimi*. That's the Greek term *ego eimi* is 'I am', and that is also 'I am that I am'. *Ego eimi* is the

expression that was used to refer to God in the Old Testament. So often in a lot of places you see *ego eimi*, it refers to God. So, when you read the Gospel, John used it quite a bit. I am the shepherd. So, he uses *ego eimi* as a kind of expression that refers to God. For example, when Moses first time met the living God, in the burning bush, Moses asked God, 'What is your name?' and in Septuagint, a Greek Bible of the Old Testament, it says *ego eimi*. I am that I am.

Because Jesus said *ego eimi*, plus take heart and be courageous that there was a divine moment. Peter experienced divine presence, and when he had experienced that divine presence, courage came to him. With that courage he asked Jesus to call him, to come and walk through the storm towards Him. I'll be where you are in the storm. When we experience God the experience courage. When we experience divine presence, the first thing that comes to us is courage. Jesus was very happy with Peter's response, so Jesus said to Peter, "come". Peter actually got out of the boat and was able to walk through the storm.

Face the Storm

That's what God wants. God does not want you to be a begging person. God wants you to have the courage to face your challenges and walk through the storm. God does not want you to be a spiritual beggar. Saying, "Lord, save me. Save me" all the time. God does not want you to be a beggar. God wants you to leave your safe boat and start walking even when it means walking through the storm. Peter was able to do that, but soon his eyes, started seeing the waves and fear started filling his heart. There was a storm outside, but also there was a storm inside Peter. Then he became a spiritual beggar again, with no choice. He said "Lord save me" because he was dying.

Of course, he needed that. He had no choice. Sometimes we need that too. Sometimes we need a crutch. Sometimes we need to say that, but not all the time. There are two kinds of faith I realized, and the two kinds of faith is this: faith that asks God to call us, to walk through the storm and faith that begs God to save us out of desperation. The second one is little faith. The first one is the authentic faith. In the beginning, Peter had that authentic faith that asked Jesus to call him to come and walk through the storm because he had courage. He had that divine moment when he experienced divine presence, so he had courage and ask God to call him to walk

through the storm. As soon as he saw the wave, however, fear started controlling him and he was dying. He was falling and falling and falling, and out of desperation, he said, "save me". You know a lot of people's faith comes from fear. That's not the kind of faith Jesus wants. Just because you're scared, you're crying out to God for help with a faith that comes from fear, but the faith God wants is a faith that comes from courage, not from fear.

For people whose main interest is in survival, security and safety and success. Their prayer is always 'save me'. 'Save me from financial difficulties, save me from disease, save me from misery, save me from difficulties of life'. But people who have met the living Christ who have met the divine presence in their lives, their prayer is different. 'Call me. Call me to walk through the storm, give me the courage to face my own storm and give me the strength to overcome it'. What they want out of life and what they want from God is not the easy way out. What they want is two things: courage and strength. Jesus wants us to be strong and courageous. He said in John 16:33 "In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!", this is my favourite passage. Don't pray that the storm may avoid you. Pray that you have the courage and strength to walk through the storm.

Learning from Challenges

Sometimes God drives us into the storm, as Jesus did in today's passage. Why? Because there are things in life you can only learn through the storm. There are things in life you can never learn in the classroom. I wished I could learn everything in my classroom, but there are things in life that you can never learn in the classroom. You can only learn them through the storm. That's why sometimes God drives us into the storm. When you face that storm, take heart, be courageous to not be afraid.

The other day I had a visitation at the hospital, one of our ESM members, and Reverend Chung was sitting beside her and he said to her, let us listen to Reverend Kim's message on suffering. So, he went to the website and turned on and for 20 minutes they were listening together. At the end of sermon, her eyes were filled with tears. Yesterday I got about 15 emails from her. She listened to every single sermon from the beginning of this year. And then in 15 emails, for every sermon she was recording was she

experienced, what she felt, and what she learned. Sometimes there are things that we can only learn through the storm.

Peter, as he took the journey of stepping out of the boat and started walking through the storm, he experienced the power of God. Can you imagine walking on the water? Probably that was with him all his life, that power of God that he experienced. However, it was not just the power of God that he experienced. He experienced his own vulnerability, his own weaknesses, his own doubt. He encountered himself too, but he also experienced the saving hands of Jesus Christ. In that few seconds, probably maybe 10 seconds, he experienced all that. He experienced the power of God. He experienced his own doubt, weakness and vulnerability, but he also experienced the hands of Jesus who saved him from the water.

That is how we encounter our true self. That is how we grow my friends. There are so many challenges in life you cannot possibly ask God that all these challenges to go around you, skip you, or avoid you. Then what you're asking is, let me live in a bubble. You can't possibly ask God to get rid of all the challenges in life. We better ask God to give us the courage and strength so that when the challenges of life come, we are ready to walk through them and learn.

There's more message in this passage than just the miracle, valuable lessons. Scripture is full of them, but we don't truly know how to read the Scripture and we put it aside. I hope that we can take the word of God in our lives. Jesus' teaching is not about religion. Jesus' teaching is about life.

Good Life

May 15, 2016

Micah 6:6-8

What Makes a Good Life?

Good life. That is something that we need to pursue. You deserve it. You're supposed to live a good life. I mean, we have one life we live. We've got to live a good life, so you need to pursue it, and you deserve it, and you have a right to do so. And God very much wants you to have good life.

At the staff meeting, I told the staff that this week's sermon title is 'good life' and Reverend Sohn said, "it sounds like Good Life fitness." That's the first image that comes to your mind. And I told him that was exactly why I chose that title. Good life. I think that Good Life fitness has captured very well what modern people understand what they think about a good life. When people think about good life, they think about a healthy and active life.

We are obsessed with what we eat, and we are very careful about what we eat. It's not just older people these days who are eating healthy food, but a lot of young people are. It's a trend, a lot of young people are into healthy food - it's much more expensive, but they don't mind paying more money for buying expensive food because, you know, "eat better, feel better." And so, they have all kinds of theories. Some stores who sell expensive organic food, they do very well. Not just tasty food, but healthy food. People choose to live a healthy life, and food is very important. A lot of health problems come from eating unhealthy food. We are eating and consuming way too much bad food.

I mean, ramen at night is like heaven, but it's not necessarily good for your body. In an elevator on the way down from the exercise room, I happened to listen to these two young Korean men talking. I wasn't intentionally listening to them, but they didn't know that I was Korean, so they were speaking Korean to each other and I just had happened to listen to their conversation. They were talking about body building and they were giving tips to each other. I was quite surprised at how hard they exercise. When I go up there, I run on the treadmill and I say, "Wow, I did so much" and I

look at my time - only 20 minutes at most. These guys are staying there three, four hours for their body. They workout religiously. It is good to exercise... healthy body, healthy mind. It is good to work hard, eat sensibly exercise regularly, and enjoy your life doing things that you enjoy. That's how we define a good life and that's how I'd like to define a good life too. You've got to work hard, you've got to exercise, you've got to eat healthy food and you've got to enjoy whatever you really enjoy doing and that's what I try to do too.

But when I look at those things, what I just described is all about external things. Food, exercise, work, and doing things you enjoy. These are things that we do on the outside, but how about the inside? Also, all of these things are about me. It is all about me, and a good life cannot just be all about me. A good life is more than that. A good life is deeper than that... It's not just about me.

The Three Pillars

In today's scripture, people came to God actually complaining. Sometimes we use this passage during Christmas time. You may think that, like a devotional to God, "What do you require of me?" That's how some songs are written and all that, but that's mistaken. Here, the people came to God complaining because God was not very pleased with the Israelites at that time. Because they were very selfish, they were only thinking about themselves, and God was not happy with them. So, the prophets rebuked the people, and people responded to God. They said, "What do you want, God? Do you want burnt offerings with calves a year old? Or do you want thousands of rams? No, or do you want ten thousand of rivers of oil? If that is enough, then God, shall I give my first born for my sin? Then you'll be satisfied? What do you want?" That's what they were saying. It wasn't like, "God, what do you require?" like a devotional response. They were angry at God.

So, there was a sarcastic tone in their response to God, and God said to them, "Oh, mortal, what is good?" It sounded like to me, "What is a good life?" God is saying, a good life is to the justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God. I want you to remember these three things. (Can you put it up please?) Act justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly. These are pillars of a good life. Doing justice is to do with morality, but morality is

often viewed as a personal thing, personal morality. Doing justice is to do with not you, but with other people and the earth we live in.

Do Justice

We are doing a terrible injustice to our environment. We need to do something about it. We are abusing the earth, resources, the land... everything that you know about the environment, we are just abusing it. We need to do something about it. I'd like to do something even from our church too. You know, it is difficult to do it at church because at home you're always there, so you can be conscious of it and you can separate all that. But in church you come once a week and then doing all that is difficult. But if you automatically assume that somebody will do it, it will never be done. It's hard. So, if you chip in a little bit more of your time taking care of the garbage and all that, then we can do it together. And I hope that someday we can do this environmental stuff at our church. Once, we wanted to get rid of Styrofoam cups. So that's why we actually bought the dishwasher, a heavy duty industrial dishwasher in the kitchen. We and everybody brought mugs and all that. So, I hope that we can do something to help out with the environment.

But it's not only the environment that is abused. People are abused. Especially people who don't have power, privilege and resources. The poor people, people of different colors, different opinions. They have been abused and mistreated badly. Maybe read the book by Ta-Nehisi, 'Between the World and Me'. He really, clearly speaks out about how black people are being treated in the United States. That's that right. Simply not right. Doing justice is doing what is right. You don't treat people like that. It doesn't matter who they are, what they may have. What morality, what orientation, whatever that is, you don't treat people that way. That is not the right thing to do.

Jesus was not so harsh on personal moral failure, but he was very, very strong and harsh on those who abused people because they didn't have power. We have to be very conscious of justice all the time. You always have to be conscious of people who are treated unfairly. Poor people, powerless people, and we should stand up for them. Living with a sense of justice is what a good life is all about. And we should use our resources to

help out with injustice going on around us. Last Friday at the Bible study, I asked them, "What is the difference between abundance from God and abundance that you have created, you have made?" What is the difference between abundance that is given from God and abundance you yourself made? The difference is, abundance from God creates gratitude and thankfulness because it's a free gift, and you are thankful for that, but also at the same time, not only that, it's easy to share with others. Abundance you created yourself is hard to share, but people who believe that their abundance is from God, then they share their resources with others. We have to fight for justice. Always be conscious. Whether at work, school, or with your family.

That's why I was very interested in feminism for awhile because women's rights have been abused and treated badly. That's why I was, for a while, very interested in liberation theology, because in South America, the people have been treated so badly. The poor people. This is a part of Jesus' teaching. Jesus always stood up for those who are weak, vulnerable and powerless.

Love Kindness

The second pillar is to love kindness. To love kindness is to live with mercy, and then the best word that came to me comes to me is compassion. I told you the word compassion is a combination of two words, come and passion. Come is together, passion is suffering. So, life that suffers with those who suffer. That's a good life. We cannot take another people's suffering casually. When we hear another people's suffering, we cannot just here from one ear and then let it go out from the other ear. We cannot let it happen that way.

Sometimes I go to a Canadian church, and I speak about some stories of suffering, it is very different. When they hear it, I can feel that they feel it. They feel the suffering in the story that I share with them. That's empathy. Compassion is empathy. When people suffer around you, we got to suffer with them. You cannot just look at it like, "Okay, too bad." Sympathy is different from compassion. That's why the last two weeks, we have collected offering for Alberta. It's not much, but at least we got to do something about it. We got to share resources to alleviate that suffering from people. The suffering of the people is real, and we have to do our best

to alleviate that suffering. It doesn't matter what it is. That's a human thing to do. That's a right thing to do.

Walk Humbly

Thirdly, walk humbly with God. Don't think that you can change anything on your own. Don't think that you can change the world on your own. We humbly ask God for help. This is to walk humbly with God. We'll do our best to the justice and show our compassion, but ultimately it is God who truly changes the world, so we'll never be discouraged. We'll try our best, but we'll never be discouraged. Humility is the same as trusting in God. From that trust, true happiness comes.

Working hard, eating healthy food, exercising regularly, and doing things that you enjoy are external things and it is about you and it's important. But living with a sense of justice, living a life of compassion and living humbly trusting in God are internal things, and is all about others and about the world we live in. We need both, but what's lacking in you? What is lacking in the modern world? I think the latter is lacking.

Your Good Life & Ours

Half of a good life is not a good life. A good life is complete. It's not half of it. Half of a good life is not a good life. We can only have a good life together, not alone. You can never be happy, you can never have a good life alone on your own. We can only be happy with others, together. Being happy when others are suffering is not a good life. It's not a good life.

People like Dr. Farmer, I told you about the book, 'Mountains Beyond Mountains', he gets about \$100,000 a year teaching at Harvard medical school. He doesn't even know where that money goes to. He lives in a church basement and he go out and just does the work. What a wonderful example. He said, "Being happy when others are suffering is not good a life. In the process of helping those who are suffering, you become happy and you find good life. What Micah said was a summary of the preaching of all the prophets. That's what all the prophets say. Simply is summarizing into these three; do justice, live with compassion, and walk humbly with God. Those three things are a summary of the prophet's message, and the summary of your life and our life.

What Does Confidence Look Like?

July 31, 2016

1 Samuel 17:19-51

The Story of David and Goliath

The champion Goliath, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him all the Israelites when they saw the man fled from him and were very much afraid, the Israelite said, have you seen this man who has come up? Surely, he has come up to defy Israel. The king will greatly enrich the man who kills him, and we'll give him his daughter and make his family free in Israel. David says, the man who stood by him, what shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel, for who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God. The people answered them in the same way. So, shall it be done for the man who kills him.

His eldest brother, Eliab heard him talking to the man and Eliab's anger was kindled against David. He said, why have you come down with whom have you left those few sheep in the Wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart for you have come down just to see the battle. David said. What have I done now? He was on your question. He turned away from him towards another and spoke in the same way and the people answered him again as before, when the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul and he sent for him. David said to Saul, "let no one's heart fail because of him." Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine. Saul said to David, you are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth.

But David said to Saul, your servant used to keep sheep for his father, and whenever a lion or bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth and if it turned against me out, catch it by the jaw. Strike it down and kill it. Your servant has killed both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God. David said, the Lord

who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will save me from the hand of this Philistine, so Saul said to David, "go and may the Lord be with you. Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail.

David strapped Saul's sword over the armor and he tried in vain to walk for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, I cannot walk with these. For I'm not used to them, so David removed them. Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the wadi and put them in his shepherd's bag and in the pouch. His sling was in his hand and he drew near to the Philistines. The philistines came on and drew near to David with his shield bearer in front of him. When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. The Philistine said to David, am I a dog that you came to me with sticks and the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, come to me and I'll give you flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild.

Animals of the field, but David said to Philistine, you come to me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied. This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hand and I will strike you down and cut off your head and I'll give the dead bodies of the Philistine army to this very day, to the birds of the air and to the wild animals, animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is God in Israel and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by the sword and spear for the battle is the Lord and he will give you into our hand. When the Philistines drew nearer today to meet David, David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet the Philistine.

David put his hand in his bag took out a stone slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead and he fell down on the ground, so David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and the stone striking down the Philistine and killing him. There was no sword in David's hand. And then David ran and stood over the Philistine. He grasped his sword, drew it out of its sheath and killed him. Then he cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. This is the word of the Lord.

When you Have Confidence, you can Live out your Potential to the Maximum

Having confidence in life is very important. Without confidence, you cannot do anything right. When you have confidence, you can live out your potential to the maximum. You all have potential. When you have confidence that potential will become maximum. Now when I look at athletes, professional athletes, they all have good skills. They are the best of the best. There are a chosen few baseball or golf or softball or basketball. They are really good at skills. They can do anything, but once they have confidence they can fly, but then when they don't have confidence, they cannot really fully function to their full potential, but when they have confidence, they really fly. They thrive in the same way with confidence. You can live, you can thrive in your life. You won't live mediocre life when you have confidence, all your potential will come out and you will thrive in your life, and so I'm wondering where does confidence come from and what does confidence truly look like?

I was thinking about it and I realize that confidence comes from within. It's not what somebody's gives me. It comes from within me. It is not something that I can decide, "okay, from tomorrow I'm going to be confident." You can't do that. It's just there. When you have confidence, it's just there. It comes from within. It is to do with what you believe about yourself. Confidence has lot to do with what you believe about yourself. If you truly believe that you are a very important person, then you will have confidence about yourself, but unfortunately so many people around me don't believe that they are very important people. That's why so many people don't have confidence about themselves. I don't know where they got that kind of insecurity. I don't know why they do that. I mean, when I look at them, they're wonderful.

Everybody was mean to David

Equipped with many talents and skills they're just wonderful, beautiful people, but they somehow don't have confidence about themselves. Maybe they have too many negative and unhappy people around them. You know when you're with unhappy people, when you're around negative people, you don't feel very good because they never make you feel good. They're designed to not to make you feel good, so when you're around negative and unhappy people, you become negative and unhappy and then you will

not be respected in that environment. I don't know where. Maybe you have too many negative and unhappy people around, why we don't have confidence about ourselves. In today's passage. David's eldest brother, Eliab was one of those unhappy people. I mean, there was, as you read, there was a war between Philistines and Israelites and then this guy from Philistine is a strong man, I mean a powerful, scary man.

He came out to anybody who comes out and challenges me. I'll kill you. And all the men in Israelites were strong too, but they were all scared they did not have confidence to fight against this Philistine. Until then they boasted about their strength and oh, whatever. But now they saw Goliath. And then they got really, really scared and they didn't dare to come out. You know, men with pride, you know, when you are standing in front of strong man and you're scared, you're scared, but you're also angry because of your pride right? So, they were all scared, but they were all angry too. And this little boy David came out and ran around and asked, what's going on? Why are you guys doing nothing? You know? And he was going and his older brother, Eliab saw that he got really angry.

I mean, as it is, he was angry because his pride was totally smashed. So, he let out his anger on David and he made David feel like garbage. This is what he said. "Why have you come down with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness" in other words, you belong to the field. You're supposed to take care of the sheep. Why are you here? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart for you have come down just to see the battle. He made David feel like he's just a little curious rat. And he really treated David like garbage. But David never took that garbage as garbage. And this is what he said. "What have I done now? It was on your question" and it looked at. He turned away from him towards another, you're not worth it.

David Didn't Back Down

He turned away from and towards another and spoke in the same way. He didn't back down. He spoke in the same way. And the people answered them again as before. That's confidence just because people make you feel like garbage. You don't take the garbage. You don't think that your garbage. I'm an important person. And he was challenging his brother in that way. Even when you came to Saul, Saul did not think much of David. He said to David, this is what is that he said: "you are not able to go against

the Philistine to fight with him, for you are just a boy. And he has been a warrior from his youth."

I mean everybody kind of put down David. David was kind of a young looking and a kind of red on his face and a cute looking boy. So, they never thought that he could do anything good. So, you're just a boy and then David without backing down he said this, "the Lord who saved me from the paw of the lion, from the paw of the bear will save me from the hand of this Philistine." You know, when I read this scripture this time, and then at the same time I was watching YouTube of a lion killing other small animals and also, attacking human being and I realized that David was not a weak man. He wasn't just a weak boy and unfortunately, he somehow threw the stone and killed Goliath, but he was a strong man. He was a strong man. Listen to what is said when is when Saul said he was on your boy. "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father, and whenever a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went after it and struck it down and rescuing the lamb from his mouth and if he turned against me I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down and killed him. Your servant has killed both lions and bears. I don't know whether he's lying or not, I'm not sure, but somehow, he said he claimed that he killed both lions and bears with bear hands.

His Confidence was not Empty Confidence

He was so strong, this man. His confidence was not empty confidence. And I realized that all his life he had built himself. Shepherding was not a glorious job. He belonged to, you know, manual labor and they belonged to a really low class, low quality job. Nobody wants to do shepherding, nobody wants to be a shepherd. But David, all his life, he did a shepherding and his father. I mean, he, he had the other brothers too, but you know, they all said, David, you go going, take care of this sheep. And they didn't do it, you know, it's an important job. You are the youngest. You're the smallest. You're going to do the shepherding, you know. Do you remember when Samuel came to Jesse to find the new King. And he told Jesse, David's father, why don't you bring all your sons and all sons sending there? And then Samuel looked at everyone I know.

He said, everything that you have is there every Sunday that you have. Oh yeah, there's actually one more. But he's in the field, you know, so what did Jesse do? Your brothers have to have, have to meet very important person today. So, you go out and take care of the sheep and then these people

have an important meeting. So, I'm in, that's what Jesse did, and so David finally, he called David later. In other words, even his family did not recognize David. Nobody recognized David and his strength, his skill, and what he could do. Nobody recognized him, but it didn't matter to David. It didn't matter whether people recognize me or not. That didn't matter. David was doing what the world did not recognize at all as important.

Right now, these days, US presidential nominating conventions are going on, all the important people are there. All the important singers and actors and then movers and shakers of the world are there, all the important people who make policy and all that. Shepherds were not movers and shakers of the world. They were invisible people in the eyes of the world. Nobody came to them for advice or help, but David, it didn't matter to him all that mattered to David was that, how can I do the best job as a shepherd? He didn't say, Oh, this is not an important job. I don't want to do it. Nobody wants to do it. I'm going to just to get a mediocre job. I don't care. He did not have that kind of attitude. He was thinking about what the best way is to do shepherding, and he did shepherding passionately when the lions and bears came. He didn't just run away. He just went after them and fought against the lions and bears and he took the sheep. He did his best in whatever job that he was given to do.

Those with Confidence Prevail over those who Don't have Confidence

Now ultimately, what killed Goliath was a stone. Do you think? I mean, David was good at throwing stones. Do you think he was born with that talent? I mean, shepherding wild animals doesn't happen every day. Once in a while. Wild animals come sometimes. What he does is he just a let the sheep eat grass and he had nothing to do. You're just sitting there all day until they are finished with feeding. During that time, he didn't waste his time. He thought that throwing stone can be a good skill to learn. So, he practiced throwing the stone and ultimately the stone destroyed Goliath. Goliath had a helmet on and in between there was little gap and David had only one chance to throw a stone, and then with laser sharp, sharp focus, he threw the stone right in the middle and destroyed Goliath. In other words, David had skill to do so. He did all this. Why? Because he had confidence about his life because he believed in himself because he believed that God has special plan for him. He trusted that God put special plan for him and God would use him he always knew that I'm a special person, chosen by

God to do important things. When you have that confidence, it doesn't matter what you do, whether you do shepherding or do insignificant work, it doesn't matter. You can build yourself, you can be strong, and you can be good at what you do. That confidence about life continuously builds you up. They never give up. So, from the beginning to the end, your life is very different. In the beginning they run much talent. They may not have much talents, but because they believe about themselves, they have confidence about themselves. Day by day they get better and at the end there's a big difference between the person who has confidence and the person who doesn't have confidence. The person who lives with confidence ultimately, they prevail.

Failure is the Best Teacher

They can be good at it. People who have no confidence, what do they do? What did they do? Probably nobody knows here because we all have confidence, right? But let's think about this creatively, imaginatively, people who have no confidence, what do they do? They just complain. They complain about their situation, they complain about how people treat them they complain about their lack of ability they just complain, and they did nothing to improve themselves. Why? Because they are scared of failures they don't do anything but just complain, but people who have confidence will not be scared of failures. Why? Because failures are the best teacher they know.

Through failure. They know what they are lacking and go at it and overcome their weakness. Only with confidence. You can do this God called each and every one of you for God's great purpose. Have confidence in God. Have confidence in yourself. When David went out to fight against Goliath, this was what he said, "you came to me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied. Come in the name of the Lord of hosts. Face your challenges in the name of the Lord of hosts live your life in the name of the Lord of hosts. By the ministry in the eyes of the world they may think it's nothing, but to me it is the most important and most precious thing that I do.

If I were born again, I will still do ministry. I love ministry. Simon, you're smart. You chose the right way, the best way to live. It doesn't matter what you do. If you're confident you can do well, you can be well. Live your life,

one life you have. Why suffer from a lack of confidence? Challenges. You want to do something big beyond your ability? Challenge it, especially high school students. Don't back down. First think about what you want to do. Doesn't matter whether you can do it or not. Don't think about that first, think about what you want to do and challenge it. Have confidence God will give you the strength. Believe about yourself. That's how we are supposed to live. Live with confidence.

Through It All

March 12, 2017

Exodus 17:1-7

Dealing with Fear

God gave the Israelites the wilderness experience and, in the wilderness, they confronted. They had to confront their own fear. There was no water. They were helpless. They're about to perish and nobody could help them. Even Moses could not help them. As a matter of fact, no human being was able to help them, they were in the wilderness. There was no water. They were dying of thirst. What can anybody do, so they had to confront fear. I wonder if fear is the most common emotion that we have. And that is an emotion that we have to learn how to deal with. If we don't know how to deal with fear, then our life will be very difficult and timid, and we will live as a victim of fear all the time. And fear does very strange things in our lives.

So, we have to learn to deal with fear. And the Israelites had to confront their own fear and overcoming fear. It's not something that you can learn in a classroom. It's not something that you can read about and intellectually understand it and then deal with that. Fear is something that you have to experience. You have to confront a situation where fear paralyzes you and then you see how much you are victims, or you're controlled by fear. So only through the actual experience of fear, can you deal with the fear, how you can do it. And it is the Israelites in the wilderness, the actual experience of fear and God lead them to experience the fear in those helpless situations. You know, deep inside there, a lot of things within us and you have to learn to train what's inside of us.

We are trained to do a lot of things on the outside. We learned to make a living. We learned to sing. We learned to do a lot of things, raised children, whatever, but sometimes we don't pay attention to what's inside. We don't know how to deal with what's going on within us. There are so many things that are going on when we don't pay attention to that and we become victims of what is going on inside of us. Sometimes we feel great, sometimes we feel down, and we don't even know why we feel good, we don't even know, why we feel so down and how precious it is to encounter

a situation where we are trained to deal with what's going on within us. There are a lot of things buried within us and therefore we need to visit them and sometimes it just comes out without any warning.

How We Deal with Fear

All of a sudden, all these emotions start coming up and you don't know how to deal with them because you never paid attention to them. So, you need to be strengthened enough to be able to handle what's going on inside of us. Last Sunday we had a KSM, a YF meeting. YF are the people in their thirties, forties. They all have little children and they were talking about parenting and how to raise these children and all that. And all of a sudden, the topic turned into sharing their pain, their hurt, their own upbringing, what kind of abuse they receive as they were young and all the hard stuff. Painful stuff came out and they probably didn't even know or didn't have a plan to share when they first came but once one person started sharing, everyone started sharing about their painful history, forgotten memories, buried hurts and pain.

They are still there in you. And sometimes they torment us, and they take us to the dark side. Sometimes once in a while you need to sit down and think, there are things that are buried so deep within you and they control you and they affect you, but we don't even deal with it. We just leave them. We're too scared to deal with them. When they come up, we try to push them into the darkness and then they torment us, they make us sick. They make us not live a healthy life, not make us really good, joyful life. They are always in the back of our minds and then I think the common and the most powerful emotion is a fear. When fear is there, we cannot really function very well. We always go around it rather than dealing with it. The Israelites were not very good at handling their fear. Instead of dealing with it, they let out on Moses and scapegoated Moses. That is the easiest thing to do, scapegoating somebody or blaming somebody is the easiest thing to do, but it's not always the best way or even good way, with your fear, you become hostile. This is what they say. Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?

What's the point of saying that? I mean, they all know that Moses can do anything. They all know that no one can do anything. Now they are in misery, they're scared, and then all they could do was finger point, to finger

point at Moses, why did you do that? What good is it by asking that and then they tried to stone Moses.

Turn to God

That's the natural reaction of human beings. I think that's what human beings all the time do when they encounter fear and this I realized that these are the four steps that human beings normally go through, first, fear that creates anger, and anger creates hatred, and hatred creates violence. This is what's happening all the time when it begins with fear that creates, anger and hatred and ultimately violence. Jedi Grandmaster Yoda, he's my favourite. When Grace was born, she looked like Yoda, so I said to the nurse, "hey she looks like Yoda" and she was laughing, but Yoda said this, "Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate, hate leads to suffering." He's a wise guy, no wonder he's a Jedi. Instead of dealing with fear, they just let out their raw emotion and behaved as victims of fear being angry, hateful, and violent. By stoning Moses, what good is it? Temporarily, they might have relieved the pressure that comes from fear, but ultimately, they will kill each other. If they stone Moses, then they would have perished right there, the results would have been worse, but Moses was different. He turned to God. He knew how to deal with fear. He turned to God and God helped them and solved their problem. I think it's wonderful to know God. I mean, if you don't know God, you will not turn to God even if you turn to Him, you won't know what to do. But since Moses knew God, he knew how to turn to God and he received help from Him.

And I hope that all of you know God in an intimate way. So, when a fearful situation comes to you, you know where to go, rather than being angry, hateful, and violent, you just turn to God. And I believe that God will help you. And that is really powerful faith. I hope that all of you learn that skill and then you learn to be trained to deal with fear. Then you'll be able to overcome anything in your situation and you can try anything and then you'll be able to do it fine. If you don't know how to deal with your fear, then you won't be able to. You won't be able to do anything in your life. But once you know how to deal with your fear, then you'll be able to do almost anything. There's nothing for you to worry about, but in life situations, sometimes a fearful situation come health problem, financial problem, job problem, relational problem. When you have children, you have a lot of issues that come up and they make you really scared, fearful. But once you know how, when you're trained to deal with your fear, then you'll be able to

handle your life well. Otherwise, you will make mistakes of destroying your life. Because fear does very strange things. It can be scary what fear can do in your life. But once you know how to deal with fear, you'll be able to persevere, and you'll be able to come out stronger than ever before.

Fear into Hospitality

Once I attended a roundtable discussion on black issues in Toronto, mostly black people and I was invited to participate in the discussion. And the guest speaker came from Jamaica. He grew up in a small village in Jamaica among 10 siblings. And he said, "You know, poverty was not a problem for us. Rather, poverty was our lifestyle. Life was difficult, but we were very happy." Instead of living out his fear, he turned fear into a positive lifestyle. After all that suffering, he said he became a person wrestling not only with his own problems but rather with others' problems. So, he learned to wrestle with other people's problems rather than focusing on his problems. He turned fear into a very positive lifestyle of helping other people. I still remember what is said during the closing worship service. This is what he said, "We are the product of hostile history, but we are going to change it from hostility to hospitality. Have you talked about hospitality before?"

The Israelites learned in the wilderness, and they were trained to turn fear, not into hostility. They learned that it is not good to turn fear into hostility. That's why they wrote this book. They wrote it so that their children may remember we made a mistake as parents and your children, I want you to hear this story so don't make the same mistakes. We turned fear into hostility, but for you, read this story and don't turn fear into hostility. They learned that they should not scapegoat anybody because of fear, don't scapegoat anyone because of fear. How often we scapegoat other people, innocent, helpless victims. We scapegoat them because of our fear. We turn all our attention to those and scapegoat them. The world is teaching fear, constantly they tell you that you have to be scared. They kind of brainwash you with fear. I hope that we don't listen to that teaching, live life not because of fear, but because of faith and love.

Turn to God

Don't love God. Don't believe in God because of fear. Fear of going to hell or fear of fear of punishment, believe in God because of love. We do a lot

of things because of fear and they make us small and small and small. I hope that you can overcome fear and become a bigger person because you deserve that. The Israelites learned that they should turn to God as Moses did. Sometimes you feel helpless and hopeless, and fear starts rising from the depth. Don't let fear control you and paralyze you. Don't blame others. Don't finger point at others. Don't turn fear into anger and violence. Turn to God. In God, overcome your fear. Jesus said "in the world, you may have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." That's what Jesus said. He has overcome the fear.

If Jesus was filled with fear, he could not have done what he did, he was not scared of the cross. He was not scared of the fear. That's why he told us, you want to follow me? Take up your cross. In other words, embrace your fear. Overcome it and follow me. Only then you can be my disciple. Once you overcome fear, you'll be a different person. Just a few days ago, a Korean president was impeached. The whole country is in total mess and chaos. They are in tremendous fear. I hope that they don't become victims of fear, they may not turn fear into hostility. I pray that they may turn fear into creative, constructive discussion, and come out of it more powerfully than ever before. My friends, there are a lot of things going on in the world, but don't let them fear you, but be strong and courageous and turn to God. God will show you what to do.

Two Realities

April 9, 2017

Luke: 9:28-43

Mixture of Two Realities

We live in two realities, good and bad. There are good times, but there are also bad times. There are times we feel spiritually high, optimistic and we feel like we can do everything well and everything will go all right, but there are also times when we feel spiritually so dry. Not only that, we feel devastated, hopeless and helpless. When things are good, we feel good, but when things are bad, we feel miserable. That's life. Good times and bad times. We cannot do anything about it. We cannot demand our life to be this way or that way. We cannot just complain because life does not turn out the way we want it to turn out. Unexpected things happen, and unpleasant things also happen. Sometimes we are to be blamed for things that happen in our lives, but other times they just happen regardless of us. Things just come to us without any warning. Life is a mixture of two realities; good and bad.

I think the author of Ecclesiastes knew about this very well, this duality of life, or the two realities of life. I think the author of Ecclesiastes knew it very well when he said this; "a time to be born and a time to die." Interestingly, my son, Joshua's birthday is the same day as the day my father passed away. One gone, the other came. A time to weep and a time to laugh. A time to mourn, and the time to dance. A time to seek, and the time to lose. He knew very well about the dualities of life. Two realities of life. A few chapters later, he gave us this advice, when times are good, be happy, but when times are bad, consider this, God has made one as well as the other. Therefore no one can discover anything about their future. That was the advance of Ecclesiastes.

Even When You're with Jesus

The disciples experienced this duality of life, even when they were with Jesus. So, I realized even if you believe in God, even if you are with Jesus, you experience these two realities in your life. The bad times will not

disappear. Good times and bad times will be there even when you're with Jesus.

The first day they went up to the mountain and experienced something no ordinary human being had experienced. They saw Jesus being totally transformed, dazzling white. They saw the two most famous Old Testament figures, Moses and Elijah, and they heard the voice of God. We've all experienced these kinds of things, being spiritually high. They felt like they were in a cloud. They were actually in a cloud. They felt that they could do anything on the way down. It was so good that Peter asked Jesus, why don't we build tents here and live here forever?

But the very next day, they encountered a very different reality. A dark reality, a harsh reality, a demonic reality. They encountered demons, the devil, darkness. They had to deal with this demonic power and in that experience, they saw that they were powerless, vulnerable, weak. They cannot do anything with their power. The boy was demon possessed. They fell for him, but they could not do anything. They felt totally defeated. The day before they felt victorious, but the day after they feel so defeated. This was what the father of the boys said, "I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they cannot do it." They cannot do it. They experienced the duality of their reality in just two days. High and low, ups and downs, elated pride and depressing embarrassment.

One Reality

Reading this and meditating and reflecting on this, I realized that two realities are not really two realities. They are just one reality called life. We cannot have one excluding the other. Good times and bad times are not two separate realities. This is simply the rhythm of life. Notes go up and down, but it is still the same song. Two realities are simply the rhythm of life and it's one reality called life, but our attitude and our feelings are very different towards our good times and bad times. When good times come, we welcome them. We like it. When bad times come, we ask ourselves why these things happen. Why are these things with me as though that is not part of me, as though bad times should not be there?

We are too sensitive. The disciples did not become true disciples of Jesus Christ just like that. Just because they were called by Jesus, they did not become disciples of Jesus Christ. They had to go through ups and downs,

victory and defeat, and through this, they were in the process of becoming disciples. They experienced failures, hopelessness, frustration, misguided expectations, false beliefs, even denial. When you read the Gospel very carefully, until they entered into Jerusalem, they all thought that Jesus Christ would conquer the Romans, so they expected that. "Let me sit on your right hand and let me sit on your hand when you have that power. When you control Jerusalem." They had a totally misguided expectation and even Peter denied him on this Palm Sunday. Until they entered into Jerusalem that's how they were, but through all that, they became disciples. They did not have a highway of being disciples from the moment that they were called.

At the Cross

The Cross is our dark times. At the cross we feel abandoned. On the cross, even Jesus cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Total abandonment. At the cross, we see only darkness. When Jesus was on the cross, the whole world became dark. The whole world. And at the cross we feel spiritually so dry. Even Jesus felt that dryness on the cross, he said, I am thirsty.

So, my friends, when dark times come, remember that. That is your cross to bear. Jesus said, you want to follow me? Take up your own cross and follow me. Don't run away. Don't turn your face away, but don't fear either. Just simply take up your cross. The cross will ultimately bring the resurrection. The cross and resurrection are not two separate realities, but one connected reality. Bad times and good times are not two separate realities, but one connected reality.

Some of you may be going through hard times right now. Some of you may go through bad times, but bad times will not stay with you forever. When you take them as your cross, they'll bring about resurrection. And I also realize this, good times are not the absence of bad times. You have good times, not just because there are no bad times. Good times are a result of how you deal with your bad times. They're not absence of bad times.

Yesterday I counseled a couple who just went through life's most difficult time. I was so impressed at how they handled their situations. I was very proud of them and I told them how proud I was. Bad times can bring worse times, but if you take your bad times with hope in God and trust in God,

they will not destroy you. When the right time comes, things will be restored. Jesus Christ did not end at the cross. Jesus' cross came to the empty tomb. That's the message of the Gospel.

Dream Calls

July 16, 2017

Genesis 41:15-16

Life Must be Lived Forward

We all need dreams to live a meaningful life. When you have dreams you tend to look ahead. That's what dreams do. In life, you've got to always look ahead. You shouldn't just look back, and you shouldn't just drown in your own daily living, worries and anxieties and things like that. But I believe that a good life always looks ahead, you see what's coming. Kierkegaard said this, "life can be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards." I think that's a very profound statement. When you look back, you can learn a lot of things, but your life should be lived forwards. To live your life forwards, you have to look ahead. To look ahead, you need to have dreams. Dreams help you do that.

Dreams Are Beyond Our Reach

There's a characteristic of dreams. You have to understand. Dreams are not easily reachable. Dreams are often beyond our reach. In that sense dreams are very different from plans. Plans are also about what's ahead of you, but you can control them. Often times, dreams are beyond your control. You cannot even imagine the result of your dreams, and many times you feel that it is impossible to achieve dreams because it's so far ahead of you.

Imagine the dream of Martin Luther King Jr., where you're judged not by skin color, but by your character? How can you imagine a world where there is no racism, where everyone just lives peacefully? Imagine the dream of Isaiah, for example. Isaiah said this, "lions and lambs lying together and the little kids will put their hands into the den of vipers and no one will be hurt." How can you imagine a world where no one hurts each other, where everyone just loves each other and helps each other? How can you imagine the dream of Isaiah? It is beyond our reach.

Why Do We Dream?

It is very difficult to imagine our dream. So, we have this question. When dreams are so hard to be reached or realized. Why do you have dreams? Regardless, dreams will not be realized. Why do you have dreams? Maybe that's why many people find dreams futile, no use, and they say negative things about dreams. Living in clouds, vanity, lots of ideas, but no action, that kind of thing, so they give up on dreams altogether. I think dreams are very important still. Dreams are hard to imagine, and it's hard to be realized, but there is power in dreaming. You know what that power is? Dreams have power to draw your life to that dream. That is the power. When you have dreams, your life automatically is drawn to them. Dreams are like a jet stream where they control the direction and movement of the wind. In the same way dreams set and control the direction of your life, dreams shape who you are, and dreams shape your life. That is what dreaming does. Even though it's not easily accessible, easily reachable, dreams continuously move you into certain directions. If you have no dreams, it's almost like living without direction of life. When you have dreams, then you will have clear direction in your life.

Dreams Are Given by God

I also realized that dreams are not something that I can make up. I can come up with all kinds of dreams, but they are doctrines, they are vanity. I realized that real dreams are given to you. It's not something that you make. Dreams are not what I choose. Dreams are given by God. Dreams have a lot to do with your relationship with God. When we think about dreams, we can think about Joseph, dreams are not luxuries, dreams can be quite difficult.

This morning I was talking with a KSM member, a young woman and she said, just this morning on the way to church she talked to her husband about her dream. "My dreams are luxury. I'm going through so much. So, dreams are luxury." But dreams are not luxuries. Dreams can make your life very difficult.

Like in Joseph's case, if he didn't have dreams, he didn't have to leave his home, but because of his dreams he was hated by his brothers and they even tried to kill him, and then they sent him away into Egypt. Ultimately, because of his dream, he was able to save his family and established the

foundation of the nation. Israel. That's what Joseph's dreams were all about. Joseph believed that it's not something that he came up with, that dream was a dream he received from God. So often, there are a lot of dreams that you make up, but there are dreams that God gives you and you know that has a lot to do with what God wants to do with your life.

Dreams Are Within You

As we enter into deeper relationships with God, this is what I realize. Dreams are moving within you. Dreams are being formed within you and dreams are given birth within you. These dreams have everything to do with what God wants to do through you. It is important to think about our dreams because they shape your existence. You all have dreams within you. They're just not discovered yet, but you all have dreams within you. When you met God, dreams were created already, deeply buried within you and maybe not discovered, but you all have dreams. Or maybe you put them aside as unimportant because you're so busy living your life.

When you sit down and carefully think about them, you'll be able to find dreams within you. Don't try to force your dreams but listen to your authentic existence and dreams will come to you, they will come alive. Then you will be able to live out those dreams and you, your life will move forward.

Dreams Are for Others

Also, sometimes, dreams, even if you find them, there are many obstacles and challenges for these dreams being realized, but just because of challenges and difficulties, do not throw away your dreams, they are precious. Just because life is hard and difficult, do not throw away your dreams, or do not replace your dreams with your ambition. Personal ambition is just for yourself, dreams are for other people. Dreams are for the community. Dreams are for the country. All these great people had dreams. Martin Luther King Jr. and Isaiah, all these people had dreams. As they met God these dreams were created within them and they lived out those dreams. No matter how difficult life was to them they lived out those dreams. They are great people.

Just because your life is busy and you're having a hard time right now, don't throw away your dreams. Sit down and carefully think about what

your dreams are, especially for young people. Most of you are young. Don't ever throw away your dreams. Start learning to practice dreaming everyday. Practice dreaming. Go and buy a notebook. If you don't have money come to me. I'll buy you a notebook. Buy a notebook and start writing down what your dreams are, what your dreams for life are, and then live them out one by one. Wonderful things will happen. You will start seeing how God works in your life through your dreams.

Let Us Rise

Life without dreams is like life without hope. My friends let us rise from our sleep and let us live our dreams. Let us bring out those dreams that you used to have and live out those dreams. You will be able to do wonderful things to each other, for the world. Yes, the world that we live in is very harsh, difficult. A lot of fights, animosity, division, all of these things are what we are experiencing every day, but we have noble dreams. Noble dreams for justice, noble dreams for peace, noble dreams for harmony and reconciliation.

Let us humbly come before God and ask God to give us dreams so that we may live out the wonderful life that God has given to us. Dreams are a gift from God to you.

Friend of God

August 8, 2017

John 15:12-17

Many People Live with the Wrong Image of God

I think many people live with a wrong image of God, distorted image of God and this image of God is very important. What we think about God is very important. Of course, this image is not necessarily explicit image that you have. It's almost like subconscious that it is underneath. And that image is God is powerful and fearful that is image that we have, God is powerful and fearful. One of the rabbis describes about his congregation member or member of his synagogue. The girl who just went to university first year, one day she just fell and dropped dead, and the school did not know how to communicate that to parents, but finally, barely. They called the parents and let them know that your daughter on the way to the class, she kind of collapsed and died.

It was too late for them to do anything. So, the parents came and then they didn't know what to do. They were very disturbed. And then the next time they went to the synagogue and met with this rabbi. And the first thing that they said to the rabbi was, "rabbi at the last Yom Kippur we didn't fast." In other words, because they didn't fast. This tragedy happened. So, this kind of a powerful image and fearful image of God we have and depending on what image you have about God, your life is shaped very much depending on what you think every day your life is very much shaped and then all you have is powerful image of God. But to know that God is powerful, you do not need any insight. Even Asian people, they knew that God is powerful. So, they all gave sacrifice to appease God.

God is Not Just Powerful, God is Love

So, then nothing bad may happen to them. So even Asian people, they knew that God was powerful. They didn't need any insight about God and people still live with that image. The powerful God images. I'm not saying that God is not powerful, but Jesus came to tell us. Something else about God. He came to show us that God is not just powerful. God is love. That's

what he came to tell us. God is love for God so loved the world that he gave his only son, Jesus Christ came to tell us to show us that God is love. This is what 1st John said, beloved, let us love one another because love is from God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God. For God is love. God does not just love. God is love. He claims that God is love and that's what Jesus Christ came to tell us. Why? Because we don't know that. I mean he had to come all the way down to us to tell us that God is love because we don't believe that we don't have that image within us.

Jesus wanted to restore that understanding of God because we human's beings don't live with that understanding that God is love. Subconsciously the only image that we have is that God is powerful and scary. This is what Jesus said today. I do not call you servants any longer because the servant does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends because I've made known to you everything that I have heard from the father that is a radical image of God, God being our friend, but come to think of it, it's not a new concept that Jesus created. God being a friend. That image is also in the Old Testament. They described the relationship between Moses and God. As friend, relationship, friendship. Exodus 30 3:11 he says, "thus the Lord used to speak to Moses, face to face as one speaks to a friend, so he already in the Old Testament, Moses and God were like friends and God called also Abraham as friends. That's how Isaiah, saw the relationship between Abraham and God. This is what Isaiah says, Isaiah 41: 8, "but you Israel, my servant Jacob, whom I have chosen the offspring of Abraham, my friend, we are God's friends. That's what Jesus said. I don't call you any longer servants. I call you my friend. The fearful God or the fearful God that we thought that fearful God came down to us to be our friend. That is a theology of incarnation that is a core of what incarnation is all about, that God far away who looks at us with fearful, scary eyes and every single move that we make and ready to make judgment upon us. We thought that that is kind of image of God, but then God came down to us and became our friend

God is Your Friend

And that is the understanding of incarnation. God is right here with us talking to us, embracing us and comforting us, but still in our mind. We put God way out there because we are too scared of thinking of God. We are too scared to have God around me. We feel that we are too dirty to have

God near me, so as far as possible, I want to get away from God. But when you understand that God is your friend, your whole life changes. When you have this new image of God, your life changes. Your thinking changes. When God becomes our friend, you have the best friend, no other human being can provide that kind of friendship to you. All other friends are not as perfect as God is.

This is what Jesus said. "No one has greater love than this to lay down one's life for one's friends." That's what Jesus did to his friends. He made us his friends and then he laid down his life for us. Do you have that kind of friend? I don't have the friend who laid down his life for you. That's the best friend you can ever have. To most of us friends are just friends whom you play with. When you have a hard time, when you go through difficulties and troubles and pain and suffering, they will not last too long, very long. They'll be there for awhile, but they cannot be with you forever. And they will not lay down their lives for you.

God Chose You as Friends of God

If you have that kind of friend, you're a lucky one. The wonderful thing about this friendship is that I didn't choose it. God chose us. John 15, 16 said, you did not choose me, but I chose you. You don't need to have the fear of rejection because God chose us. Jesus chose prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners. We don't usually choose those people as friends, but Jesus chose them as friends, not because they're worthy, but because they need friends. They were the social outcast. Nobody wanted to be friends with them. Nobody wanted to be around them, so they had no friends in a way that's why they needed friends Jesus chose them to be friends because they needed friends. That's how Jesus understands friendship, to be. For us, friends are those who are like me, who can play with me. You may feel you're not worthy. You may not be that popular. You may not have that charisma to draw people. You may not have attractive qualities, but God chose you as friends of God. Rejection hurts, betrayal hurts. Jesus received rejection and betrayal from his friends, but he never rejected them, and Jesus never rejects us.

When you start seeing God not as a scary powerful being out there, but as friend, something changes within you, that you will get to know God so intimately, unless God becomes your friend, you cannot know God. You'll have a lot of concepts of God, but you cannot really intimately understand

and know God only when God becomes your friend, you can get to know God very intimately. Jesus said, this is what you just said. "I do not call you servants any longer because the servant does not know what the master is doing, but I called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I've heard from my father. So, when you have that intimate relationship with God, you get to know God very intimately and that's how your existence become fruitful. As you get to know God intimately, your existence becomes fruitful. In John 15, 16, Jesus said, "and I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last so that the father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. The father will give you whatever you do, you ask in Jesus' name," and that gives me confidence. Whatever I ask God, God will give me. That gives me tremendous confidence. God will give you what you're asking for and then you will have that confidence in life

Knowing God is Your Friend Liberates You

And you will love being alone with God, God becomes your most intimate friends. You can say almost anything you want, and you need, and you're not scared of being lonely. You are not scared of being alone because you are alone with God. Walk with God you talk with God. You laugh with God. You cry with God. God becomes your best friend. Knowing God, knowing that God is your friend is the most liberating experience you can ever have, and you'll be free from fear. That's why Jesus said love casts out fear. At the end of today's scripture, Jesus said, "I'm giving you these commands so that you may love one another as God is a friend to us, be friends to each other. That's what community is all about. Be a friend. Be a friend to each other. Be Nice to each other, be kind to each other. If you can show your love to each other, being a friend to another human being, that's the best thing you can do while you live. Be a friend to each other.

Fear and Love

August 20, 2017

Psalm 27:1-6

Fear is Everywhere

These are words of David. Last week we reflected on King David. I said that King David was like the engine of Israel. They could never forget King David, and today I'd like to talk about fear in wake of all these things happening and the violence, hatred, and bigotry that are all around us. There are so many people who are trembling with fear. Fear is something that we all have in our mind. It's probably one of the most powerful emotions that prevent us to live a fulfilling life. We have to learn to overcome our fear. As long as we are afraid, we cannot live a life with confidence. Fear itself is not bad. Without fear will not be able to feel the danger that is imminent around us. Fear alerts us and makes us ready to deal with the danger.

In Barcelona, Mr. Gray, a Canadian, was right there when the attack happened. With his family two, three children - they're a little older - as soon as they saw something going on, they ran into a hotel. And then they stayed there for five hours without really knowing what was going on. Mr. Gray, he said the scariest thing in the hotel. What he said was that they didn't know what was going on. They didn't know if there was one truck, or they might've thought that a group of terrorists might come in with guns, and they were able to hear some gunshots too. So, they thought, what if they come into the hotel? What if they're right here in the hotel? There were so scared, and for five hours they just stayed in that hotel.

Fear That Paralyzes

That is the street where Will proposed to Grace. We were just there a few years ago. And that happened. Fear is a natural reaction from people who face danger, but there's also fear that paralyzes us. Not preparing us to fight against danger or preparing for the danger, but there is a fear that takes away all our energy and desire. It just makes us feel totally helpless. It paralyzes us. We cannot do anything once we are captured by this fear. We freeze with this fear. Usually, fear comes from seeing the real danger

that is imminent around you, but this kind of fear has nothing to do with real danger that is imminent to you. It is that they are just thinking about the possibility of danger. For example, if you had a painful memory of failure, you will be afraid of failure. You cannot do anything because you have this fear of failure.

Changjoo, who is our conductor, he's going to Australia to study. And yesterday he did a wonderful performance. It was such beautiful music that he powerfully played, and he changed it so much, and we enjoyed it so much. But I'm sure he went through many, many hours of fear of failure. "What if I cannot master this?" But he did not give up. He kept on practicing and playing and ultimately, he was able to perform the beautiful piece.

We all sometimes have a kind of unnecessary fear. You may say, if you had a big car accident, you will have a fear of driving. If you're hurt by people, you will have a fear of people or relationships. Some kids are bitten by dogs and even when they're grown up, they're scared of dogs. We have learned this fear through painful life experiences and this kind of fear is not always helpful. It takes away energy and confidence from us. It hinders us from living with confidence. It creates neurotic anxiety. Living with this kind of fear is not fun. Living with this kind of fear makes us very passive.

David and Goliath

You know what fear does? Fear affects the way we see things. Fear makes us see problems bigger than they are. We should see problems as they are. Then we should be able to see the solution, but when you see the problem is much bigger than it is, then you will know you'll freeze. You will know any solution to the problems. We talked about Goliath and David the Israelites. They saw Goliath much, much bigger than he was, so they thought, we have no solution since we're so scared of Goliath, but David saw Goliath. He could see that Goliath was strong, but at the same time, David was able to see his weaknesses too, and he attacked those weaknesses. That's how he overcame Goliath.

Many times, we fall into the problems because we see them as much bigger than they are. We need to learn to see things as they are, then we'll get better insight about our problems. Don't pull it up when you have problems. Don't blow them up. See them as they are, and then you'll be able to see the solution. You will feel scared not because of our problems,

but often because of our fear about problems. If you don't have fear, you will be able to overcome those problems, but because of fear of your problems, sometimes we feel what David felt. He experienced many crises in his life. He crept in totally crushed by fear. You know when problems come right before you, you can handle that because you have coming up, so you can handle the problems, but once you get home, you sit down by yourself.

How Do You Deal with Fear?

All of us are have let this fearful thinking and emotion overwhelm us, and we lose there. So, David, probably when he was alone, these kinds of fears, all kinds of fears probably attacked, but somehow David knew how to deal with his fear. I think that's very important, knowing how to deal with fear, because we all live with fear. But how do you deal with fear?

This is David's secret. David said, the Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid.

He had confidence in God. Every time a fearful situation arose. He didn't focus on his fear, but he focused on God. That is the secret of overcoming our fear.

Spiritual Territory

When fear attacks us and conquers us, we have to find the area in you that is not affected and occupied by fear. So, when fear attacks you, you have to think about the area that is not conquered and occupied by fear. I call that spiritual territory. We all have spiritual territory that is not occupied and conquered by fear.

That is the area that we need to hold onto. The part of you that looks to God. When you have the spiritual territory that is not totally paralyzed by fear, doubt will save you from fear. Give special attention to that spiritual territory, that part of consciousness he held onto when everything looks hopeless. That part of consciousness sees hope. When everything looks impossible, that part of consciousness sees possibility. That part of consciousness made David confess in this way. Even though I walk

through the darkest valley, I fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Evil is not to be Feared

After the terrorist attack in Barcelona, people said this, we will not fear. In other words, they paid attention to the future territory. That part of consciousness which is not occupied and conquered by fear. The very next day neo Nazis came out to make a demonstration, to say that immigration is not good, and Muslims have to be. They came out to proclaim that they fit right there. People in Barcelona came out, said that they will not let our city be conquered by fear. They will not let our city be conquered by racism, and we will not let our city be totally paralyzed by fear. That is courageous spirit. That is the spiritual territory. They paid attention to that consciousness. They held onto that. Evil is not to be feared. Injustice is not to be feared. Patriotism, bigotry, racism, violence is not to be feared.

Love Gives You Courage

God created us so that we can fight against those things. Fear was supposed to have fear over those things. That's the future. What is the best way to expand spiritually? I believe that it is love. Love expands that spiritual territory. Love gives you courage. When you have love, you have courage. Now, when you have power, only when you have love, you have courage. Love casts out all fear. This is what John says in 1 John, there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out. Fear for fear has to do with punishment and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. Love is what expands the spiritual territory. I hope that your love for God may expand that mutual territory within you. This is what David said, one thing I asked of the Lord that will I seek after to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and the choir in his temple. He was surrounded by enemies, but he was talking about love for the Lord. He had love for God. Love for God gave it to them. Courage. Now justice gives you courage. Love for truth gives you the courage. Love for life gives you courage. Be courageous. Don't fear. Fear and love are like darkness and light. When the light comes, darkness cannot stay. When love comes, fear cannot stay.

God's Love

We love worse within us. Fear slowly disappears from us. You can never be separated from God's love. In other words, you can always overcome your fear. This is what St Paul discovered. In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us, for I'm convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing in the world can separate us from the love of God. Let us not fear the injustice that is not fear, hatred, bigotry, and violence. Let us not fear anything that tries to destroy human goodness. Josh mentioned God is good and goodness will cherish the goodness of God and we will also cherish human goodness. We'll stand up against anything that tries to destroy the human spirit.

God gave the United States so much power, so much resources, so many talented people. They're supposed to exercise good leadership to build this global community better than it is. I see so much division. "America first." That's not a Christian slogan. Christian slogan is others. First Task Christian slogan. That's not Christian message. This is the time to stand up with courage. I'm glad that there's demonstrations everywhere in cities, big cities, Boston, Britain, and everywhere.

This is the Time

This is the time for us Christians to stand up for what we believe, have courage, live out what Jesus commanded you to do. Don't be silent. Speak up against evil, and any kind of prejudice.

This is the time for us to embrace each other. Love each other, accept each other. This swirl, this globe is to be shared, not to be conquered.

Courage to Choose

August 27, 2017

Matthew 7:13-14

Scripture Passage

Your Uniqueness Is Courage

Today is a kind of graduation service for those who are graduating from high school and also from elementary school. Graduation in other words is commencement. Commencement meaning 'it begins', so you begin a new chapter of your life. So, I have kind of chosen this passage for you to meditate on as you read the scripture. I'm going to talk about the narrow road. I think the narrow road is not necessarily what we automatically think. We think it means to choose a hard and difficult life.

Maybe there may be hard and difficult life, but narrow road for me is your own unique life that you choose. You follow no one else but your own authentic existence. I'm not talking about just career, but also your existence. What is your unique existence in this world? I think we all are created uniquely, therefore we're supposed to live a unique life. Sometimes people think 'I'm going to be in this profession or that profession', that doesn't necessarily guarantee that you're living a unique life. In everyday living your way of thinking, your way of doing things, your way of treating others, your way of thinking of God makes your life. You need to have your unique personality, your own person. And that is what is important.

If you ask a lot of old people. they all say, "I just thought that that is the life you're supposed to live. So, I did everything other people did, but after 40 years, 50 years and kind of wondering whether I chose the right path. When I was young, I didn't think too much about it. So, I just chose whatever is given to me by my parents, from friends. And I just followed it but now that I think about it, I ask, am I living my life or am I living somebody else's life?" So, it is very important to take the narrow road that your own unique life chooses. It doesn't matter what age you are, I think that is something that we all need to think about. I do believe that to have to choose the narrow road or to make a choice you need courage.

You may wonder what courage do we need? I just, I choose things, but I think you need courage to make conscious choices instead of just living out what is given to you. I think you need courage to choose your own path. Not many people have that, necessarily. You have to have a very strong character to be able to choose your own path, not the path that other people are following. I personally think that you need lots of courage to make choices because often we let our circumstances dictate our lives. We let our circumstances dictate our thinking and the way we view the world. Making a choice in our life is a basic human right. Being able to choose for myself is a basic human right. In some countries that have dictators, the people don't have a choice, but we live in a free world, so we have choice, but yet we don't exercise the right to choose. We don't exercise choice. Living in a very free world we let circumstances dictate us so that we don't have to make any choices, so we live our lives without making choice for ourselves. I think that is a basic human right. Everything we do, we should do it with our conscious choice. "Yes, this is what I want, and I want to choose that. I have nobody to blame because it's my choice."

But many times, we don't choose and then we turn around and say, "Oh, my parents told me to do this" or "Oh, there's so and so did this," or "At that time, all my friends did it, so I did it..." so that it's not your fault. Ultimately, you make a choice. You're accountable for that choice. You have a responsibility for the choice that you make. And maybe this why a lot of people don't make choices because they are not courageous enough to take the responsibility, to take the blame. But making a choice takes courage and making a choice is a basic human right. A Christian writer said, "Destiny is a matter of choice, not chance." Your destiny will be decided by your choice, not by chance.

Power in Your Choice

There's a professional baseball player, Jim Abbott. He used to play for the California Angels, New York Yankees, Chicago White Sox, Milwaukee Brewers, and all of these famous teams he played, and Sports Illustrated once I praised him as a pitcher who can throw 90 miles per hour. These days, a lot of people do that, but at that time, that was kind of a unique and was a big deal. Since he was young, he wanted to play baseball, but his circumstances were not very good. He really desired to play baseball and to be in the major leagues, but he was born without a right hand. Think about it. You don't have a right hand. You only have a left hand, but since

he was young he wanted to be a baseball player. What do people say? What do his parents say? 'No, Jim, maybe there's some other things that you could do well with one hand' or other friends may say he is being ridiculous. But he wanted to play baseball so much and at the end of it he made it. He was able to play baseball in the Major League and he was even praised in Sports Illustrated.

He chose to go for it. All of the other people said "Don't," but he chose to go for it. He said this, "I've been blessed with pretty good left arm and a not so good right arm". He didn't have a hand. Jim Abbott summarized his life in this way. "I had to learn to do it with one hand because that's all I had". You make choices with all you have. Don't say that, "If I had money, I would have chosen that". That's just an excuse. He chose even with one arm to play baseball.

Your choice is a powerful thing that you can exercise in your life to live your own unique, authentic life. Our destiny is decided not by chance, but by choice. Jesus said to choose the narrow road. He said, enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life. And there are few who find it. Only people who choose the narrow road will find life. Your own authentic life. People who just follow everybody else. You don't find your own life. Entering through the narrow gate means we live with our choices. Many people take the wide road because they don't want to choose.

Choose to find your own life since you're young. Don't delay it. Whatever you do even, choose to play. If you're going to play, don't play just because other people forced you to play. You choose to play. You choose to study. You choose what you want in your life. From when you're young, you have to learn to make choices. Don't blame your circumstances. In any circumstance you can exercise your basic human right to choose. Jim Abbott did not give up his right to choose just because he had only hand. He exercised his right to choose. Even in that limited circumstance, one hand was all he had. People who did not make a choice in their lives will live without empowerment. They will live without vision. They'll live without passion. They will not make their best effort because it's not something that they chose. They will do mediocre work, live a mediocre life. They will just float along with the rest of the people

About Your Choice...

But my friends, remember this: to make a choice, you have to know who you are. You have to know what God's will is. You have to know your circumstances. Making a choice without thinking is not making a choice to me. It is a lazy choice, but to me it is not even a choice. To make the right choice, you have to think hard. You have to meditate upon yourself, upon God's will and upon your circumstances, and then make your choice. So, to live a life of conscious choice, you need to be a thinker. He had no choice but to be a thinker. You need to be able to discern a ray of light that penetrates through the darkness. You'll be able to see that light. You should be able to hear the whispering voice amidst all the noise around you. You will hear that voice, a very clear voice, and you'll see a ray of light. When you start making choices in your life, you can see the light. You can hear the voice. Only then we can make choices. Without seeing it, without hearing it, you cannot make choices.

Even if you make a choice, it doesn't mean anything. In life we need conviction. Seeing the light and hearing the voice is conviction. You need to have conviction to live. One life we live, we live with conviction. St. Paul heard that voice. He lived a mediocre life. He lived a good life following the law and all the good things that other people said is good, but once he met Jesus Christ, all the things that he thought was good were not good anymore. He found his own voice in his life. Jesus' disciples, what did they discover when they met Jesus? Conviction about life. I thought that was life. Just doing the work and then the fishing and all that. If I have more fish than I'm happy, I thought that was everything about life. But after meeting Christ, they found conviction in life. That's what they found after meeting Christ. They found the secret of life in Jesus' teaching.

One more thing about choices. First, you have to live with a choice. Second, you have to know to make a choice. Third is, when you start making choices, you will make mistakes. Definitely you will make mistakes. If you don't make choices, you won't make mistakes. If you start making choices, you will make mistakes and those mistakes will make you feel really, really bad because you made a wrong choice. You will all go through that ugly feeling in your life when you start making choices. That's why a lot of people don't make choices because they don't like that kind of ugly feeling.

But instead of not making choices, learn to embrace your own mistakes and even that bad feeling. Don't be scared of making mistakes. We all make mistakes. People who make conscious choices, you have to be strong. Okay, I made mistakes, but my life is not over. I'm going to attack again, and I am going to confront it again. Don't be scared of mistakes. We faulty human beings always make mistakes. Our mistakes kind of make a judgment on who we are and that's why we don't like it, but through mistakes you learn. This is what Michael Jordan said, "I've missed more than more than 9,000 shots in my life. In my career, I've lost almost 300 games and 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed". 26 times. He counted. In other words, he felt really, really bad. That's why he's saying that 'I failed over and over and over again in my life'. We are talking about Michael Jordan and then he said, as I quoted before to you, "I can accept failure. Everyone, everyone feels as something, but I cannot accept not trying". Why don't you try something with your life? What are you so scared of? Do something.

Do what God wants you to do. Don't just pay attention to your parents. Don't just pay attention to your friends. Pay attention to God, and of course a lot of times God speaks through parents, so I'm not saying that don't listen to your parents. Often, God speaks through parents too, but ultimately learn to listen to God. And to do something worthwhile, something beautiful, that can only come by conscious choice. Enter through the narrow gate.

Life's Confidence

March 25, 2018

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Retaliate

Before the worship, we briefly meditate on what we're, what attitude, what worship is, and what attitude we should have, and then what kind of heart does God really desire from us? I think the heart that God receives from us is a broken heart, brokenness. Humble brokenness God will never despise. God will see that broken heart with mercy and grace and that is the part that gives true worship to God. Today, I'd like you to picture this particular verse, verse six. I gave my back to those who struck me and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard. I did not hide my face from the insult and spitting. I want you to look at that scripture passage and then think about it. If you put yourself into it, how would you feel? It is a troubling picture in a way. I see a totally helpless victim and we don't like this kind of picture. If people strike us, we strike back so that they will never strike us again. If people insult us and spit at us, we will not just take; we will retaliate. We believe that that is the right thing to do, but is there anything that we can learn from what we just read?

When you look at the picture very carefully, you will be able to see what Jesus went through. That was exactly what Jesus went through. That is what the cross it looks like. Is there anything that we can learn from the cross or there's nothing to learn from the cross? The Cross can be very dangerous in a certain sense. When people hit us, abuse us, and insult us, they destroy our self esteem, dignity and self worth. Our core self is attacked. That's why it is painful. That's why we people react and retaliate because they want to protect that inner self, the core self that holds us together. Otherwise, we'll collapse. I find people very difficult. That is the most difficult thing to deal with. The people or the most difficult thing to deal with. I mean all the hard work and that's fine, but people are very difficult to deal with. People can be selfish and self centered, and people are very unpredictable. One day they are very good, but the next day they are totally different. Are they the same person? We wonder. People give us the greatest joy, but at the same time, they give us the deepest pain.

Because of people we laugh, but also because of the people we cry. People are difficult to deal with and also people can be quite cruel at times. When their hearts are closed, they can be quite cruel. When we look at the way they killed Jesus. We can see how cruel human beings can be. From human cruelty, even God's son was not spared. To this image shows us the cruel image of human beings. They struck, pulled out the beard, spat and insulted. I once witnessed on the street to a person actually beating another person. You ask the cruellest scene where the face he punched, and the other guy fell down on the street and he went and then kept punching at him. When I saw that, I was so disturbed by that scene. That's a cruelty. Not only are our people cruel, but also, they're very ignorant. They don't know what they're doing often. They don't even know how much they hurt other people. That's why Jesus on the cross said, Lord, they do not know what they're doing, but Jesus asked for God's forgiveness for them.

That's a miracle. That's amazing! and he's on the cross. They were nailing him on the cross and then Jesus was thinking, they don't know what they're doing. Forgive them. That's the very hard thing to do. How nice it will be if he can be a warm and loving presence to people around us, how nice it will be if you can give them joy and hope.

Crushed

How nice that will be. If my presence can give some joy and hope to other people, that's a wonderful thing to do, to be, but we're not always, we know that. Many times, we hurt others; cause pain in them and make them angry, especially to those near us around us and that pain is so deep that is hard to overcome. That's why we need to always humbly discipline ourselves so that we know what to say and what not to say and be always considerate and show kindness to whoever we meet and that is a right thing to do as a human being to those people who are strangers, we need to be considerate and kind. We should not say hurtful things about people. Even though we try so hard still, we make mistakes and hurt others unconsciously, and how much more will hurt other people if we live mindlessly? We just act out our emotion. How much we will hurt other people. Even if we discipline ourselves is so hard not to hurt other people, but if you just behave like you feel like it, how much more you will hurt other people.

Not only do we hurt other people, but we also get hurt by others. We don't remember well the pain that we caused in others, but we remember vividly the pain we received from others. There is no hurt that is not painful. It doesn't matter how small, maybe all the hurts are painful, maybe or hurt often our self that is deep within gets wounded. When we are hurt. we feel like I'm nobody. They make me feel that way. When you heard they feel like I'm a pitiful an existence. Our dignity gets crushed and our self-worth is taken away from us and we get thrown into the deep darkness and we even doubt about ourselves. Our damaged itself, distorted image and the dark shadow will torment us, and we get angry and we lose ourselves. That's why the cross is dangerous because you lose yourself if you're not careful. They tried to get rid of anything beautiful from Jesus. He could not just kill Jesus. They had to kill you just as a condemned person. They did not just want to kill Jesus. They wanted to condemn Jesus and let people know that he died because of his own curse. That's what they wanted to do. They trampled on Jesus integrity and took away any importance left in him. That was the cross.

Most of us maybe we actually experienced the cross will get devastated, will be devastated. Will not be able to survive. A lot of us will lose ourselves. We may not be able to stand up again once we experienced that kind of cross in our lives. Somehow, Jesus was different even though people try to take away dignity from him. He had that dignity intact. He was confident. He didn't lose himself. He did not bow down before their insults and humiliation. They took everything from Jesus, but they cannot destroy the soul. They took away everything from Jesus and they crushed everything Jesus said, but they cannot destroy the soul, the core existence of Jesus.

Confidence

I think the key is verse 8 and 9. When we read again verse 8 and 9, it shows us why he was able to have that confidence. He who vindicates me is near. He is God. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord who helps me, who declare me, who will declare me guilty. He had confidence in God. When you have confidence in God, you can have confidence in yourself and no one can crush you. Once we have confidence in God, no one can take away your dignity. We don't get. We won't get affected so much by what people say to us, about us. How people treat me is not the most important thing that we worry about anymore. We don't get affected by

what others do to us anymore. We can be confident and strong. As we live our lives. Yes, we meet all kinds of people. The thing is we cannot change them. Can you not expect them to be changed? Well, we can continuously get hurt and when your soul is damaged by them, that's not right. We need to build the core in our identity and I think that's what God can give us, when we have confidence in God, even though they may hurt us, they should not destroy. They will not be able to destroy our soul.

The world condemned Jesus as being wrong, but Jesus' resurrection proves the world wrong. God knows us and when we have confidence in God, we can embrace people's criticisms. That's hard. That's hard, but when we have confidence in God, then we can embrace people's criticisms. If there is something wrong with us that we repent and change, but if they misunderstand me, even that we can embrace their misunderstanding and we can move on with life. We can on with life. We don't live anymore by what other people say about me or how other people treat me. I have my way because God gives me that confidence. Don't ever forget that you are beloved, beautiful children, children of God. Instead of reacting to our situations and to what people do to us, we live with confidence in God and in ourselves. Don't pay evil for evil. When we have confidence about God, we don't need to pay evil for evil. We will pay evil for good. That is the power of the cross and will serve without a feeling of pity. We will serve others and love others with confidence. That's what Jesus did. That is the power of the cross. They can not humiliate me anymore.

Closed Door

April 8, 2018

John 20:19-23

Disciples Hid

Fear is a funny thing. It is real and it's very concrete in a way. Once fear takes a grip on us, it paralyzes us. And also, in fear, we feel like we're very small and powerless.

And, when the fear attacks us, often we locked the door and we want to be behind the closed door. Fear does many strange things in our lives. All kinds of things it does today. You see a group of people who are completely paralyzed by the fear. They were the disciples of Jesus Christ. So, let us look at when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met, were locked for fear of the Jews. I mean physically, literally that happened. But also, I think it has a symbolic kind of message there. They were so scared. They lock all the doors and they kind of hid behind the closed doors. I mean, after Jesus died to think the Jewish rulers would have just left him alone. I don't think so.

Fear is Gone

They would have looked for other disciples who were part of that movement which caused so much trouble for them. They wanted to arrest them. If they could, they would have killed them. So, they just wanted to get rid of the seed of that movement altogether. That's why they were looking hard for these disciples and that's why the disciples were really, really scared. But the risen Lord did not leave them alone behind a closed door, that's what our risen Lord does, when we are behind a closed door, our risen Lord does not leave us alone there. So, the risen Lord came to them, and this is what he says when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met, were locked for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them among them and said, peace be with you.

He came to the disciples to lift them up from fear and to liberate them to free them from fear. And then the way he liberated them from fear was to give them the peace. The peace was a real thing. That peace was given to them so that they were able to overcome their own fear. I was thinking about fear and peace. Both are very concrete. They both affect our lives, but they are on two opposite poles. I can say a radical contrast between these two if I use some kind of metaphor or imagery. When I think about fear, I feel like very. It's like a storm and furious sea. The waves high and no control. There's no anchor. You're just all over the place, all of the map when you're in fear or this storm and wind and you see that. But when I think about peace, it's like a calm lake or even 100 meters below the surface of the ocean, which is a very chaotic underneath of 100 meters down there is peaceful, quiet. Fearful heart is like you're all over the place. You have no centre. You're very anxious and you worry a lot, but peaceful heart is almost like power, is a confidence that you are ready to handle your problems, that you have this inner quiet confidence that you can deal with your challenges of life

Come Out

It's unshakeness. Nothing can shake you, but fear. You're just shaking all over the place. The risen Lord gave the disciples this peace, it was very different from what they felt at that time, and I had this image, imagery, that peace Jesus gave kind of entered into them and swallowed up the fear, that kind of image I got. Jesus gave him the peace and peace entered into our soul and swallowed up our fear.

And then Jesus sent them out. Don't stay there behind the closed door. Go out. That's what Jesus said. Jesus said to them, again, peace be with you as the father has sent me, so I send you, don't stay here. I'm going to send you. You got to go out and you got to live what you're supposed to do. Doing what you're supposed to do. Don't just stay behind. Today's story is almost like is a turning point for disciples. Until then, they really did not know Jesus until then did they were people or fear, but after that they were radically different people. They went out and live with confidence. They locked the door tight, but no door. Doesn't matter how tightly they lock it cannot keep the risen Lord from coming in, Jesus broke through their tightly closed hearts and entered into the depths of their soul and chased out the fear by giving them peace. I realize a piece is more powerful than fear. Once we have peace, that peace will be able to chase out. I mean once we

have peace, the peace will be able to chase out the fear. I believe the peace is more powerful than fear, so the personal who lives with peace is more powerful, can live more powerfully than people who live with fear.

Fear in Life

When we are afraid, we close our heart. We don't let anyone come. No matter how long and painfully maybe we think that that is the safest thing to do. They just closed their heart. They don't let anybody come in. They get locked up.

We have this one week of an examination of the minister's candidate drink theological school. They have to go through this one-week process and there were examiners who examine all of these students. And a few times I went to that conference as an examiner and a few people I rejected there. The reason that I rejected them was after one week I told my other counsellors, I don't know them, I talked with him. I interviewed them. I don't know who that person is. I don't get a sense of who that person is because that person is so locked up. He or she doesn't let anyone come in. You may be safe behind the closed door, but you will not have freedom. You shall know the fear and the fear show make you safe. This is not a scripture verse. This is what I wrote. True, but Jesus did not teach that. Jesus taught this. You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. So, decide. Do you want safety, or do you want freedom? Fear may give you safety, but only the truth will give you the freedom. People who are in fear always look for safety. They always choose the safest way, but the people of resurrection have peace of Christ and confidence they can come out of the closet, come out of the closed door. Because they have confidence, they can be creative. Because they have confidence, they believe that the uncertainty of the future is not something that they should fear or avoid at all costs, but to embrace it because they trust the promise of God.

The promise of God is stronger than the uncertainty of the future. People who are in fear will look at everything in life with a negative attitude. They see life as an enemy to win and defeat, but the people of the resurrection do not see their life as an enemy. They see it as an opportunity. The way you look at life is different depending on what you have. If you are afraid, you will look at life as an enemy. If you have peace, you will look at life as an opportunity. People in fear also see other people as enemies. They guard themselves against them. They cannot open their hearts to them

because they're too scared to be hurt and their relationship relationships become very difficult. They cannot relate to people.

Fear and Forgiveness

The risen Lord brought the disciples out of the closed door. Jesus made them the people of resurrection and gave them the power and authority. This is a first time Jesus met the disciples after he was risen. First time he told something, and then this is the last time he would have said this. In other words, the most important things that they were supposed to do. Jesus told him into the story. This is what you got to do. This is how you're going to live your life. Before he was taken up, ascended into heaven. This is what he left with them and then he gave them the power and authority, and what is that? Verse 23. If you forgive the sins of any, they have forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained. This is a power and authority. Jesus left the disciples with. This is what we are supposed to do as the people of resurrection, as the disciples of Jesus Christ.

To forgive somebody is the most difficult thing in the world and that Jesus left us to do that, but you know how hard it is to forgive anybody?

When we are in fear, we can never forgive anyone. Forgiveness is not possible in fear. In fear, you can only see hatred, condemnation, anger and division. To forgive others and to embrace their faults and weaknesses. You need power and I believe that power is the power of resurrection. That power is the power of the spirit that frees us, humanly is impossible, but only through the power of the spirit we can do that. Last Wednesday was the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. He fought for the black people in US. He fought for the weak and the vulnerable people who are victims of racism, but he never fought the fight with hatred.

He always fought the fight with the attitude of forgiveness. This is what he said, forgiveness is not an occasional act. It is a constant attitude. That's how he thought the racism in US, and this is also what he said, darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hatred. Only love can do that. He fought the fight as a person of

resurrection. He didn't build the walls. He didn't fight in the closed door. He came out to the light and fought it with love and forgiveness and that's the only way and God gave that ministry to us. People of resurrection should go out and live our life of forgiveness. That's our portion. God did not tell us to go and condemn and judge others. That's not our portion. God told us to go out and forgive. Do the ministry of forgiveness. Fear goes to anger, anger goes to violence. That's what we see in the world around us every day, but God called us to go out and do the ministry of forgiveness. Let us come out of the close door and enjoy the freedom. The freedom is the freedom to forgive. That is what the people resurrection should do.

The disciples did that. As a matter of fact, they gave their life away. Just to do the ministry of forgiveness, are there people that you need to forgive, or do you need forgiveness yourself so that you can come out of that fear and live a life of freedom.