

Pastor Gwen's Message
1st Wednesday of Lent
"Faithfulness"
Wednesday March 9, 2022

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Since coming to Christ the Servant in October of 2011, I have only performed three weddings. Two were at local lakes and one at the Congregational church. This June 18th I have been asked to do another wedding for a delightful young couple. I have an appointment to sit down with them on Good Friday to talk about their ceremony. So, I have lately been thinking about what it means to have a good marriage. Not to worry Rodney, after 40 years, I am not quite ready to trade you in, just yet!

An article I read this week was from the New York Times and printed years ago, but still today it is quite appropriate. It was about questions couple

should ask before getting married. Some of the questions were obvious and some not.

What does my family do that annoys you?

Do we want to have children or not?

Who would be their primary care giver?

If we have a TV in our bedroom who gets the remote?

Would we be prepared to move if one of us get an amazing job offer out of town?

How will the chores in our household be managed?

Do we know what spiritual beliefs each other has?

Will our children be raised in the church?

All these questions have various subject matter but really boil down to power, control, and authority. In a marriage, it is important to figure out who has the power, in what situations and how is it going to be exercised. I think it is true that in most relationships we do not want to be pushed around and abused. And to make sure that does not happen, we often try to exert power over others so as not to be bullied or hurt.

In a marriage as in any good relationship there is also a little thing called faithfulness. Faithful to the marriage vows, faithful to each other and your situation.

I read a good story this week as I was studying for this message told by Pastor Mary Erickson.

A husband and wife both found themselves unemployed. Day after day they pounded the pavement to look for new jobs. Meanwhile, they pinched their pennies to stretch their funds. One evening, the man came home, and he found his wife wearing a dress he had never seen before. "Is that a new dress?" he asked.

The wife blushed and stuttered, "Yes, honey, it is. I-I-I- bought it today." "Why on earth would you buy a new dress? You know we don't have any income!"

"I know." She said, "I was downtown to apply for a job there. And I passed by the window of Sharon's Dress Shop. And there was this dress hanging in the window, and it was so cute. I thought there was no harm

in trying it on. So, I went inside, I tried it on, and it fit so perfectly. It is like Satan was sitting on my shoulder, urging me to buy the dress.”

Her husband said, “When that happens, you need to tell the devil, ‘Satan, get behind me!’” “That is exactly what I did!” she replied. “But then Satan said, ‘You know, it looks great from back here too!’”

Ah temptations come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. It is only through faithfulness in the goodness of God that we can squelch the power the world tells us to aspire too. So, faithfulness to each other and our promises, is not just important in human relationships but also in the one that we have with our God.

In our reading for tonight, we have the devil tempting Jesus repeatedly in several ways. Jesus is offered power by the Devil and he says, “No”, instead trusting in God’s way, being faithful to His Father in Heaven. Denying the Devils way of grabbing the world around the neck, thinking big, taking charge, and going straight to the top, all worldly ways, Jesus has a better way. That is to love and trust God, following the path set before Him and setting his eyes on Jerusalem and the old rugged cross.

When we are tempted to not follow the ways of our creator, the devil wins. And temptation can come in attractive packages. Sometimes they look good, even righteous. I would love to be able to change stones into bread to feed all the hungry children in this town, heck to feed all the hungry in the world. But that is not a power that God has given me. Yet, I could be tempted at such an invitation.

Jesus faced the temptation to control, command and dominate by depending upon God alone who speaks through Scripture. God, with the power to create the heavens and the earth, gives Jesus the ability to give up that power, and to become powerful, paradoxically in weakness. Make sense? Jesus chose the power of compassion, love, and faithfulness instead. And folks that is our message too. And so is the Christian life we are asked to live. A different kind of power.

Those kind of faithful people are the ones I want to surround myself with. They are people who make a difference in the lives of others. They are faithful

people who love us despite ourselves. They portray God's love, hospitality, and faithfulness to others.

Yes, there are lots of people in this world that are not faithful to God's calling of the Christian. Vladimir Putin is one in the news lately that lives with a very different idea of power. But even sending in Chuck Norris and the Delta Force or Sylvester Stallone or Charles Bronson, to get rid of him, would not eliminate the violence and terror he has caused. One of Rodney's favorite statements is, "If you cut off the head of the serpent it just grows another one." And so how do we deal with what is going on in Russia and Ukraine right now?

I think we must trust the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We must be faithful to the God who gave us our very breath, so we can love Him and love our neighbors as ourselves. And however, we show that love to our Ukrainian brothers and sisters is good. Whether it be prayer for their safety or financial support. We need to do something to be faithful to our call to love one another as God loved us. We must be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world today. I don't know about you but just about every time I see all those women and children trying to escape the war, tears come to my eyes. I just don't understand how one human can inflict such harm on another. That folks, is proof that the Devil is still at work in our world today.

It really is not easy to be a Christian when you look at what is going on in the world. Our faith asks us to see the world differently, through faith-filled eyes. The same eyes that our Lord and Savior used to overcome the power of the Devil and follow our God alone. It is our call to pray that we can follow Him faithfully knowing that God is still in control and the Devil will be defeated at the end of time. **AMEN**