



Sunday, January 28, 2018

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Psalm 19:14 New International Version (NIV)

14 May these words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Psalm 71 is one of my favorite Psalms. The psalm was probably written by David when he was in his 70's and reflects on God's life-long care. I love this Psalm for several specific reasons.

Verse 1 In you, Lord, I have taken refuge;

***Where else would I go**

Verse 6 From birth I have relied on you;

you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you.

***As a Obstetrician with lots of deliveries from a mother's womb, I did not realize I was doing God's work**

15 My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds, of your saving acts all day long— though I know not how to relate them all.

16 I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, Sovereign Lord; I will proclaim your righteous deeds, yours alone.

Verse 18 Even when I am old and gray,

do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.

***This is you and me, Old and gray with something to say to the next generation**

The title of this sermon is "A Personal Journey in Missions". Our personal journey in missions is what we can say to the next generation. I, and you, must give our personal journey in missions,

because people, even in Green Valley, need Christ. This is our personal witness! I started my journey when I accepted Christ as my personal savior when I was about age 10 in my confirmation class. I wanted to help people. I thought I would be a minister/ pastor but I have such a terrible singing voice that I ruled that out. God's sense of Humor-- now I'm giving a sermon. God still answered my prayer, he made me a doctor. We all can reflect on when we accepted Christ and were given the gift of faith and how this impacted your life. But I am getting a little ahead of myself.

This brings us to our New Testament verse to guide us.

Acts 1: 8

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

This is our mission. By the Holy Spirit we are to be a witness for God. So I thought I would open with the Who, Why, What, and So What to understand missions.

Who—It is not about us. We were formed by God for His purpose. The WHO is God. We think in terms of self- Who am I? What am I here for? What are my goals? What are my ambitions? What is my future? My---My---My. Our focus is backward. We were made by God for God for others. It is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our purpose, our importance, and our future.

Why---God is in charge! We were made for God's purposes. There are hurting people who need Jesus and we are the way God chooses to help people and allow us to tell our story. We are not accidents waiting to happen. We have a God given purpose to witness to others.

What---God has given us a purpose driven life with worship, fellowship, discipleship, service, and missions.

- Worship---We are here today at Valley Presbyterian Church to praise, give thanks, and glorify God. By His grace through faith our worship is a life style of enjoying God, loving God, and giving ourselves for His purpose.
- Fellowship---We are formed for God's family, the church. God expect us to interact together and grow together. Fellowship Hall is correctly named and is the expected option after this service. Meetings, classes, and activities have at their heart fellowship. This is our family, get involved, serve and grow.
- Discipleship---We were created to become like Christ. The process of changing us through the Holy Spirit is sanctification. We all are a work in process. Every Church service, meeting or study we should become more mature and grow spiritually. We were created to become like Christ.
- Service---We were created, saved, and called to serve God by serving other Christians. He has given each of us a unique ministry at Valley Presbyterian Church. Using your spiritual gifts is expected not optional.
- Mission---We were made for missions. Our ministry is our service to believers and our mission is our service to unbelievers. Our job is to introduce others to God. This bring us to So What!

The So What---Our purposes allow us to give glory to God by Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Service, and Mission. However, we are in a spiritual battle with the flesh, the world, and the devil. This story/skit that I discovered on the internet, Satan Calls a Meeting, identifies our fight. Remember the devil works by deception, diversion, and division. Let me read part of this skit.

Satan Calls a Meeting

Satan calls a summit meeting of the rulers of darkness, the rulers of wickedness, the principalities, the powers, and the demons sometime in the second half of the first century A.D.

Satan speaks-"I have called this extraordinary session of *representatives from every sector of the Evil Kingdom because we need a new strategy. Since the Pentecost sensation, we have had a standoff or worse with the followers of the Jesus. Our strategy of intimidation, persecution, temptation, murder, and suffering has not stopped the church.*"-----"*Neither Paul nor the other leaders are our main problem. We have killed several of the apostles, but we can't stop the ordinary people.*"

Spirit Prince-"That's right, they talk about Jesus spontaneously, whether they have a leader or not."

Demon-"They don't need a place to meet either, we have them kicked out of synagogues or public meeting places, they just worship in their homes.

Potentate-"Why should they be such a problem? They are unlearned and ignorant."

Demon-"They may not be educated, but they are not unlearned in spiritual things. They can cast you out of someone in a moment.

Satan-"Then how do we stop them? If we can't stop them by force, we must be shrewder."

In this beginning part of this story, Satan says "Our strategy of

intimidation, persecution, temptation, murder, and suffering has not stopped the church." This applies today.

At this time, the countries with the greatest growth in Christianity are Iran and China. Both are or have been under attack.

Example Iran: Iranian Muslims are converting to Christianity at an unprecedented pace in home churches. Pam and Dave L tell the story of Christian persecution in Tehran, Iran. The government began a process of intimidation in 2012. They began harassing and imprisoning Pastors, required registration of Christians, forbidding worshiping in native Farsi language, and finally closing the churches. This including St Peter Presbyterian Church establish in 1864 and they confiscated all the libraries with Christian literature. The response of the people was and is home churches. Our special offering from our Mission Breakfast several years ago helped provide 500 gigabits flash drives for computers. Since 1 gigabit holds 20 yards of books. 500 gigabits holds the entire library plus 50 studies and 50 sermons and can be up dated with ease. Now each home church has it's own library and more.

China : The 3rd church movement in China is amazing. The communist government decided the greatest threat in China was corruption. They decided that any faith based endogenous(Chinese) religion would be allowed and fostered. Thus the 3rd church(Christian) developed using office building for churches and supplying Christian literature including the bible in Mandarin. A pastor friend visited and went to a bookstore warehouse where 1 million bibles were stored. When asked how soon the books would be gone he said "About a month". This event is occurring in China where we used to smuggle bibles into the country! Up to 10 percent of the population of 1.3 billion Chinese are Christians. The number of Christians in Communist China is growing so steadily that in 12 years China could have more churchgoers than America." The bad news, the church is so successful that persecution is now beginning.

Back to the story- Satan Calls a Meeting

All the evil spirit beings sat in silent despair. Suddenly Satan stood to his feet.

Satan speaks-"I have it!" he exclaimed. "We will make Christians think that only leaders can witness!"

Spirit Prince-"Hey, that's a great idea! We can tell them that leaders are different and no one else is equipped or ordained to do their jobs."

Potentate-"Right! We can even tell them that the offices of the apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, and the teacher are all combined in the office of pastor. Then the pastor will have so much work to do that the church will hardly grow. That way he won't have time to pray or to study the Word."

Satan-"More important than that, he won't have time to equip the saints. Especially if we can keep him busy trying to do all the church's ministries."

*Demon-"Then we can get the **ordinary** Christians to gripe at him because things aren't going well".*

*Spirit Prince-"We could even make them think that missionaries who go to other places are holier than anyone else. Then no **ordinary** Christian would ever dream he is to be a missionary,"*

Satan- "Most honored potentates, spirit princes, and demons, we have devised a most propitious strategy. It will take time to accomplish, but it will work. We will revise our strategy and make Christianity respectable. We will convince men and woman again, as we have in the past, that worship is to be done in a certain place and at a specific time. We will make them passive spectators

of their hardworking leaders. Our kingdom will not be in danger if we can keep the church members passive and have to fight only overburdened leaders."

What are the misconceptions of missions that this story exposes?

A mission is perceived as a super special assignment for extraordinary people. God's purpose, mission, is to be accomplished by **ordinary** people who believe in and serve an extraordinary God.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 Says this best!

26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him.

Missions are accomplished by **ordinary** people serving an extraordinary God---

Another misconception is that a mission can be done by proxy. We can pray, support, and encourage missionaries. This should be done; but individual **ordinary** Christians have the responsibility to be directly involved in God's mission. Some Christians mistakenly interpret their monetary giving as their total responsibility to evangelize Green Valley and the world. Not everyone can be a sent missionary; however, everyone can be on a mission for God. Our mission field is under our own two feet.

The Great Commission is not the Great Suggestion and applies to all followers of Christ. Telling others how they can have eternal life is the greatest gift you can offer. Believers and nonbelievers need to hear your story.

A personal Journey in missions is the title of the talk today. Let me tell of God at work in my journey.

As I said, I accepted and received Christ as a 10 year old and He made me a physician. As a physician, I witnessed countless miracles because I learned that **seeing isn't believing but believing determines what you see**. I saw the power of faith and prayer in patient care.

One of my many God experiences in missions occurred when I retired. I prayed to God. "I'm retired, what now, how can I be used?" I, OF COURSE FORGOT MY PRAYER, BUT GOD DID NOT FORGET! I retired the end of August of 2004 and in October 2004, I went to a Milwaukee Gynecology Society meeting where I met one of my old students, Gloria Halverson, a world-renowned specialist in infertility who is also very active in missions. She had recent back surgery and had been praying for some one to take her place as a mentor in a couple months for a senior resident in OB/GYN at Kajabe Hospital in Africa. She looked at me and said "you are retired, you are an old professor, how would you like to go to Africa?" I heard OLD! -Have you ever been at a mission festival and thought, send me, send my kids, but not to Africa! I went home and asked Judy, "How would you like to go to Africa? She said without hesitation, "Great, lets go!" We signed up for Africa. Samaritan Purse would make the arrangements of credentials, travel and housing but a few days later Judy asked – "how were we going to pay for this". The trip will cost \$10,000 and we are retired. My thought, and I told her "If God want us to go He will provide." A few days later my old clinic, from which I had just retired, called and explained that one of the clinics had a personnel problem. Could I come back to work part-time? God provided! Africa of course was amazing and we were blessed. Kajabe is a Christian community of 4,000, 60 kilometers north of Nairobi on the Rift Valley. The 205 bed hospital is a teaching and training center and definitely Christian. Prayer meeting before surgery, prayers with the patient, Christian music in surgery –Cover in prayer. Many miracles and stories of Christian witness were experienced. Ask Judy about Gen dee a-God has a sense of humor! The available laparoscopic

equipment I used to teach was old but perfect since this was the original equipment I used 20 years ago.

Old and gray with something to say also applies to you. You have a mission story to share with the next generation. What is your Mission experience? Have you supported our Mission Partners? Stand and stay standing (if you are able) if you have gone to Casa Vida Nueva Orphanage in Mexico

Stand if you visited or made lunch at Nogales Crossroad mission

Stand if you ever gone on a Mission Trip

Stand if you ever Volunteered or brought food for the Food Bank or provided dinner for Presbyterian Campus Ministry. Stand if you have ever volunteered or supported our missions -Hands of a Friend, Posada Life Community Services, St Andrews Children Clinic, Valley Assistance Services, Youth on their Own, Coffee ministry, Quilt and Shawl Ministry. Stand if you have supported with prayer our missionaries Pam and Dave Lovett and Kristi and Bob Rice?

A missions experience is also cooking or caring for a neighbor- please stand

Congratulations, you have many mission stories!. **Now that I awoke you by standing.** Be Seated

Two mission projects are upcoming in February. **Empty Bowls** the major fundraiser for Valley Assistance Services on Saturday 2/10 at Valley Presbyterian Church(tickets available in Fellowship Hall) and **Mission Breakfast** highlighting St Andrew's Children Clinic's Cleft Pallet program on Saturday 2/24.

Back to missions. What is a common remembrance of your mission experience? The universal comment is "I received more than I gave." This is exactly what God says in the bible.

Luke 6:38 New International Version (NIV)

³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down,

shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” -- God is no debtor, you are blessed and you will receive more than you give.

Another universal experience is Joy, a fruit of the spirit. Remember the fruits of the spirit are God's absolutes- Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self Control. For example Love is Self-sacrificing love. Goodness is moral perfection; Gentleness is meekness, strength under control. Joy also comes from God. The Joy you received in your mission experience is heavenly happiness- you made God smile.

The title of the sermon is “A Personal Journey in Missions” –reflect on your journey- You may be old and gray, but you still have something to say to the next generation.

And all the people said AMEN