

Spirit of Hope

Mount Hope Lutheran Church

Preschool and Childcare

May 13, 2020

He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His great mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5 NIV

I receive and read several daily devotions; some I read everyday others I will only open occasionally. One that I haven't opened and read for a while I decided to open last week. It is one from Rick Warren written to pastors. In this offering, Pastor Rick shared several ways to experience "Personal Renewal". I share two of these helpful ways here for all of us:

Make time for regular renewal.

I once owned a car that lasted for 20 years because I had it serviced regularly. If you're not taking care of yourself regularly, you won't last 20 years in the ministry (or in life).

I recommend following this little formula:

- **Divert daily.** Do something fun every day that relieves stress.
- **Withdraw weekly.** Take a sabbath every week.
- **Abandon annually.** Get away for a vacation every year.

You won't accidentally develop balance in your life. You need a plan. You also need a partner to help keep you accountable.

Learn to live in light of eternity.

The secret to staying power in ministry (or life) is to not lose your perspective. Vince Lombardi used to say, "Fatigue makes cowards of all of us." I think the last few months we can all echo those words.

When Jesus faced the toughest time of his earthly life, he set his eyes on eternity. Hebrews 12:2 says of Jesus, *"Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame"* (NLT).

You can only accomplish the impossible when you look at the invisible. If you focus on your problems, you're going to be overwhelmed.

It's always a good time to pursue personal renewal, **but it's particularly important right now**. I pray that during these days you fall in love with Jesus in a fresh way!

Yes, good and encouraging advice for all of us and I hope and pray you can experience renewal too this and the coming weeks. We continue to prepare as we await the governor's okay for church gatherings. We don't know the exact date, but we know we are one week closer!

Please continue to pray for Mount Hope, our country, the leadership, those on the frontlines battling during this pandemic and our world; COVID-19 will be conquered! We are praying for the day we will be able to worship together again.

Serving together,
Pastor Fran Green

The Message

Who's Paul Am I?

Motivation! It's a great word isn't it? It's the fuel that gets us going. We really can't do anything unless we're **motivated** to do it can we? How many of you, either now or when you were growing up, enjoyed school? I have a confession to make; I have never really liked school and I truly didn't care for it when I was younger. I received an award one time while I was in the Air Force and one of the prizes for winning this award was one free class at the local college and I had one year to redeem this gift. Well, needless to say, I didn't think a whole lot about this gift and desired to let it go; however, my wife has a completely different view of education than I do and you would have thought that I'd won the lottery by her response in learning of this gift. My wife has almost always gone to school to complete this or that degree and to better herself, so she was constantly "encouraging" me to register for a class and use this wonderful gift.

Time went by...finally I was shamed into registering for a class to use the gift that had been given to me. I think I registered for a history class; obviously it wasn't that memorable; but I began attending the class. Well, to make a long story shorter, I ended up dropping the class. It wasn't that it was too difficult or anything; I just couldn't get into it. **I was not motivated.** I couldn't see the point of taking this class at this stage in my life. My wife wasn't very proud of me, but she's forgiven me.

It's a funny thing about people isn't it? We seem to need **motivation** or purpose that motivates us to move us to act in our lives. I was totally unmotivated to take this class and ended up wasting the gift that was given to me.

I believe that there are a lot of Christians who are the same way. Many who call themselves Christians simply have **no motivation** to live the life Jesus calls us to. This is easily noticed when one observes the actions of Christians and realizes that oftentimes there is no noticeable difference between the life lived in Christians and that of non-Christians. Further, it seems to me that we are wasting our gift.

Let's take a look at the apostle Paul and see if we might learn something about living the Christian life, so that **we might be motivated** to live as the people Jesus calls us to be building each other up, sharing and telling others of the free gift of Grace available to them. *Ephesians* chapter 4 and we will look at 1-4.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called.

Do you sense the urgency in Paul's words? It is quite interesting to consider Paul's situation here. This needs a bit of set up before we proceed. Paul was under house arrest when he wrote this letter. Most scholars believe that Paul wrote this letter while he was imprisoned in Rome. Paul had appealed his case to Caesar, which he was allowed to do because he was a Roman citizen. Paul had gotten himself into a bunch of trouble in Jerusalem, much like Jesus did; for spreading the message of Jesus. So now he was in Rome awaiting trial. He had certain freedoms like being able to have visitors and to continue to write letters and so forth; the only thing is that he was always chained to a Roman guard. So, let's take a look at how Paul the prisoner was handling his situation as he "begged" the readers to lead a life worthy of the callings they had received.

In his letter to the Philippians, which was written from the same place near the same time as that of *Ephesians*, we get more of an idea of Paul's situation when he penned *Ephesians*, *Philippians* and also *Colossians* and *Philemon*. We know **he is extremely motivated** to achieve the prize of the heavenly call of Jesus. What does this mean and what exactly is Paul doing when he tells us to imitate him? Let's look at chapter one of *Philippians*. We read from *Philippians* 1 verse 12 – 14.

I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear.

Paul is actually happy that he is in this situation! He is now able to tell the entire Imperial Guard about Jesus! Further, Paul's actions are motivating many other followers of Jesus to be bold in their lives. Paul is totally consumed by Jesus and is living his life completely for Him. His entire life is about spreading the Message. Acts 20:24 Paul tells us *his "ethos" and purpose in life, "But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus – the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God."* **Paul's example should also motivate us.**

So that was way back then and it is not possible to live like that today right? I mean, we've got our lives to live and there is no possible way to be imitators of Paul now is there? It seems that Paul is saying that we are to do this even today and that those who do not are living as enemies of the cross with their minds set on earthly things. This is difficult to swallow isn't it? Yet, this is what Paul is telling us today. *"In light of all of this, run the road God has called you to."* But how can we? I believe the answer lies just before today's reading from *Ephesians* in chapter 3:14-21. Here's how the New Living Translation states it (Yes, this was in last week's mailer too):

When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

And there it is! Paul's motivation and power. He is completely overwhelmed as he thinks about God's grace and how he has worked in and through his life. He has seen the power of the Holy Spirit build and grow the church in Ephesus. He has seen the Lord work in powerful ways; he is in fact, **motivated by the power of the same Holy Spirit.** It's as if he is overcome by the Spirit, all he can do is fall to his knees in thanks and praise to God. This is also our motivation and power. Clearly Paul is telling us in this prayer, that **this motivation and power is available to us as well.** As we place our faith and trust in the Lord, we too will grow into God's love empowered from his glorious, unlimited resources.

Still I can almost sense the tension when one is presented with a challenge to live as radical life as did Paul. Well I am certainly not asking you to engage in "street corner" evangelism. I don't think that there are too many people in our society who are open to this kind of teaching about Jesus. I believe that we are to live a radical life of love for God and neighbor.

Later, in chapter four of *Ephesians* we are told that we are all gifted in different ways to live out our callings. Paul was obviously a gifted evangelist and teacher. What are your gifts? We're not all gifted in the same way, but we all have been gifted in some way. We are to use our gifts to serve others; to love God above all things and neighbors as much as ourselves. How do *you* do that? Are you a teacher, evangelist, apostle, prophet or pastor? Do you help others, do you have the gift of administration? Do you serve or encourage; or perhaps you give generously? Make no mistake, you have a place in the body!

People should see us living differently in the world. *Ephesians 4:16* tells us how:

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

What is your motivation today?

Some of you are familiar with the following story, as it is included in my book; but I repeat it here. A long while ago before I began the journey into ministry, I received one of those phone calls that nobody likes to receive. “Fran, Ron Green went in.” ‘Went in’ is skydiving talk for dying. Ron was my cousin. He taught me how to skydive. We spent much time together over the years. He had over 15, 000 jumps and perished while training another instructor. The sad thing for me was that they had his memorial service in a bar. My grandma was so upset about it and had to ask Ron’s wife why they would do such a thing and why they wouldn’t have it in a church. She said, “Well you know Ron never believed any of that stuff.” This has troubled me over the years since it happened. I don’t claim to know where Ron is spending eternity because I cannot know. What troubles me is the fact that I was completely **unmotivated** to share the Good News of Jesus with him. It never came up, or maybe I never let it come up. What a wasted gift. Perhaps I was Ron’s Paul.

I cannot claim a “Road to Damascus” experience like Paul and I would never claim to be like him, except in my unworthiness to proclaim the gospel message. What I do claim; however, is the **motivation** to finish the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus – the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God. How about you? **What’s your motivation?** Who’s Paul are you? AMEN.



Announcements

Memorial Day Service

Mount Hope is preparing a patriotic salute to our military men and women. We would love to include your picture and the pictures of your family who have served in the military. Please email them to Christina (cbrantner@mthopelutheran.org) by Friday, May 22.

We will include any pictures we receive in our worship service on Sunday, May 24th. You could also mail them to the church this week. We will return your pictures the very next week by mail or hold them safely until our return to church.

Financial Update

God is good. He continues to bless the ministry of Mount Hope.

Thank you for your continued financial support for His ministry. After making some adjustments of expenses, we have been able to keep current with payroll and everyday bills. Hopefully, we will be able to worship together soon. Please continue with your financial giving. Thank you again for your support.

Bob Tolzin

President, Mount Hope

Sunday Worship Schedule

8:15am Traditional Worship Service
9:30am Connecting Hour
Bible Study / Sunday School
10:45am Praise Worship Service

Phone: 952-888-5059

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Website: www.methopelutheran.org

Mount Hope's Staff

Fran Green	Pastor
Candy Frein	Administrative Assistant
Christina Brantner	Music Director
Kathy Sundseth	Custodian
Kim Woebke	Preschool and Childcare Director
	Administrative Assistant
Steve Sundseth	Custodian
Sam Killam	Custodian

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