

RETURN TO HOME PAGE

SERMON – Why I Am Here

TEXT – Romans 8:26-39; Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Some would say that the answer to my sermon title is very simple, I am here because I have been appointed as pastor of North Main Street United Methodist Church by Bishop Mark J. Webb. While it is indeed true that I am here because I have been appointed here by Bishop Webb, that is only part of the story.

I am here because I am a follower of Jesus Christ. I am here because I believe with every ounce of my being that God loves me. Can there be any doubt of God's love when God's own Son Jesus Christ was willing to die on a cross so that you and I could be free from guilt over our misdeeds, so that we could be surrounded by an overwhelming love. A love that is not some abstract concept but can fill our hearts. The anthem, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" is one of my favorites. It was playing when I gave my life to Jesus. It is a song that for me speaks powerfully of God's love. It is a song that often brings tears to my eyes. It is a song that brings a flood of memories of God's love at work in my life. It is a song that speaks to individuals and a world. The testimony of the Bible, the teachings of Jesus, and the testimony of the long line of faithful followers of Jesus loudly proclaim that God's love reaches out not just to a chosen few but to every being that ever existed and ever will exist, no matter how worthy or unworthy they may seem.

God's love reaches out to the people of all the nations of this world of ours. It reaches out to the people of the North Main United Methodist Church. There is nothing that is stronger or more powerful than God's love. I have seen the prayers of the faithful bring comfort and healing to the ill, I have seen people of faith amid their own financial struggles reach out in the name of Jesus Christ to feed the hungry, I have seen those addicted to alcohol find the strength to break the chains of addiction and become vessels through which God's love is poured out on others, I have been blessed to see hope restored to victims of Hurricane Sandy through the work of Volunteers in Mission in Middleburgh.

For the owner of one of the homes in Middleburgh, Hurricane Irene seemed to be that final straw. She had been hospitalized for some major health problems when Irene flooded her home with water reaching five feet deep on the first floor. This was just too much for her, she just gave up and her health continued to decline. But when her husband shared the news that a Volunteer in Mission Team was rehabilitating her home she saw a ray of hope and a reason to get better. That June a graduation party was held for her grand-daughter in her home with her in attendance. God's love in the person of those team members provided hope and healing for that woman. I was blessed to be part of that team whose efforts were possible because of the gifts of United Methodist to Annual Conference and UMCOR that helped pay for the materials used by the volunteers.

RETURN TO HOME PAGE

In Paul's words: "For I am 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 (Romans 8:37-39)."

The Kingdom of Heaven, the place where God's will is done is a thing of value to which no amount of wealth, recognition, or status can compare. God's presence in our lives is like yeast, it can transform and enrich every aspect of our being. It can take who we are and transform us into who we were created to be, a person made in the very image of God, a channel through which the love of God is expressed in flesh and blood, a member of the body of Christ, the Church.

When we are open to and allow God's presence into our lives, God can be at work in every aspect of our daily lives, enabling all things to work together for good. The triumphs and defeats, the sorrow and joy, the mundane events of daily life and the times of great adventure, disappointments and triumph; can all work together for good. I know that has been my experience. I also am certain that when bad things happen to us they are not the result of God doing something bad so something good can come out of it. Rather I believe that give us the freedom to choose and sometimes we choose badly and reap the results. Other time we are the recipient of the consequences of the bad choices of others exercising their free will. And sometimes we just have no answer for why things happen the way they do. But as I look back on my life I do see the hand of God taking all the events of my life to work together for good.

A failure as a premed student led to a major in Sociology. A civil service exam led to work as an Administrative Analyst. Each of these areas would provide knowledge and skills that would serve me well when I responded to a call to ordained ministry. Likewise, when I lost my wife Diane, God used that experience to give me knowledge and understanding that has proven invaluable in dealing with the bereaved. When I retired from active ministry God used me to serve on a part-time basis and I experienced a time of highly productive ministry.

I am here because I believe that God has called me to be available to serve congregations that need a part-time pastor.

I believe that what is true for us as individuals can also be true for us as a congregation. When we dare to trust God and are willing to move beyond why is this happening to asking what is the good God is seeking to bring out the events of the past and present? Part of discerning where God is calling us to go I believe starts with a willingness to actively listen for God's voice, to be engaged in prayer and meditation. In keeping with my belief in the need to actively listen for God's voice starting this Thursday I will be leading a time of prayer and meditation each Thursday evening at 7:00 PM.

I am here because I believe that God has called me to serve the people of North Main United Methodist Church. I believe that our Bishop and the District Superintendent seek in each appointment to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

RETURN TO HOME PAGE

I am here because I believe that we have a message that world desperately needs to hear of an unbelievable love that breaks the chains of guilt, proclaims that every individual is a person of value with something significant to contribute, offers a way of life that promises there is enough for everyone, and supplies the means to conquer what has been proclaimed impossible to change.

As United Methodists we dare to proclaim that we are called to make disciple for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.