

Sermon Ps 19 Matthew 9:1-4, 9-11, 14, 18-22, 27, 32, 37 June 8, 2008

God's Teaching Moments - and Ours - Holy Interruptions

It was good for me to be away for a good portion of these past 2 months - to be privileged to be a part of a Medical Mission trip to S. Africa with two of my children, and then to be with our family in North Carolina, and to spend a week at the Presbyterian Retreat Center at Montreat.

I was blessed by the new experiences and the change of pace... And then I came back twice to find, each time, how true it is that the Church really is - this church and every church, really is about you - and about what you let God do through you.

Preachers can come and go, hopefully we do you more good than harm - But you, God at work in you - you being God's people, doing God's will, you are the Church. And a Church is only as vital and alive and as good as the faith and works of its people.

And - while I apologize a bit for the size of the Bulletin today, it bears witness to your faith your good works as God's people in this place. And - it is both humbling and very exciting for me to see all that you are doing as Christ's people.

You've sacrificed and you've built to share your faith with others. This week - opening the church to serve the homeless... and then the next two weeks - with dollars and hours of labor, building a home for a family in Pontiac. And in a few minutes we will be commissioning a youth mission team of 20 people who are headed to Washington next Sunday.

It is a joy for me to come back and try to catch up with all you are doing...including helping get the new Faith Enrichment Center ready for an open house for the community on Sunday, June 29. More power to you.... And - some announcements... about all that you are helping to make happen.

Dan Boyer from Habitat for Humanity -

Children's Moment

10 -2 -1 - Signs and Signals and Directions.... How do you know when to cross the street? How do cars know when to go and not to go.? How do we know the right things to do..... God has helped us That's what 10 - 2 - 1 means. It is God's way of letting us know what is the right way to live. 10 Commandments. 2 great rules. One principle - love.

Scripture.. Matthew 9: 1-4, 9 - 11, 14, 18-22, 27, 32, 37

The Gospel lesson this morning is from Matthew - and I will read portions of the chapter, and I encourage you to read along in the bibles... And together let's Listen for, look for, notice - how often Jesus was interrupted in what he was doing by someone who wanted him to do something else ... and listen for what happens with these interruptions, how this interruptions become holy teaching moments.

Let us pray. Lord, may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of these your faithful and loving people, be acceptable in your sight, and your good word to us this day in Christ. Amen.

Maybe its from getting back into the activities here at OLCC,P - and seeing again how many days, how my days, are filled with many different kinds of activities, often one activity interrupting another. Phone calls, drop by visitors, staff issues, Presbytery business. But I think mostly it was being a grampa for a couple of weeks, that has made me more sensitive to what seems to be happening to Jesus in the record of his ministry in Mathew 9.

And - on Christian Education Appreciation Sunday, it is good to be sensitive to a deep truth about how we learn most about God's presence in our lives, and about God's will for us and for our living. That - as often as the course of our lives - of a day - is interrupted - the interruptions in life can be, may be, very holy moments of learning.

Did you get a sense of this in the reading from Matthew? Jesus kept getting interrupted. Jesus sails across the sea of Galilee, he takes a brief break from his public ministry, and just as he steps ashore people ask him to heal a paralyzed man.

Then Jesus began to select his disciples, Matthew first, and as he sits down to dinner with Matthew, other followers arrive and interrupt, other followers push their way in, and then the Pharisees get word of the wonder - sinners with a Rabbi - and they push in and interrupt, and almost before Jesus can deal with them, the disciples of John come with their concerns. And while Jesus is answering them a leader of the synagogue comes with a plea for help....

And on his way to help the leader's daughter he is interrupted by a woman who seeks healing by touching Jesus robe - and he responds to her need, and hardly has he then cared for the leader's daughter, then two blind men call out to him for help, and almost before he can respond another demoniac is brought to him.

And Jesus' life reads like a breath taking rush - dealing with one interruption after other. And - quite frankly - it all sounds a bit too familiar to our own lives? So often - we find our lives interrupted, our plans pushed aside by some event- little things - traffic delays and detours, lots of those this year... and bigger things by far, illnesses, and losses, and job changes, interruptions.... Interruptions in our lives that give us pause and cause us to ponder, if we will, the deeper meanings in life.

And the wonder in all of this, the miracle, maybe, if we can see it and feel it in our own lives - the wonder to be appreciated on this Christian Education Appreciation Sunday..

The wonder is how Jesus' responded to each interruption, how he used each one as a truly holy and teaching moment - a time to share the core values of his life and faith – he interrupted the interruptions with meaning and purpose.

In a funny kind of way - Sunday School - is one of these kinds of interruptions in our lives - and so is Logos on Wednesday nights. They are times, activities, that in a way ask us to interrupt our lives - moments that break into the busy break neck pace and race of a busy family's life. Times for thought and reflection that interrupt the flow from school to sports to the arts.

And - these interruptions can be, we work and pray they are, here, holy moments - God's teaching moments.... Times when the moments of interruption are holy, draw us closer to the God who wants to be our guide and our guardian in life.

And often they are... As our children learn the words of our faith, but also its worth.

And so are some of the other kinds of interruptions in our lives.. Even the interruptions of the interruptions.

Vacation time - a little planned interruption – some time for myself without the interruptions of church business and people's need - and the quiet of a sleep in morning is broken very early by the grandchild's cry - Grampa, Grampa - can you play with me.

And - the interruption – that interruption - has every chance, if I let it, of being a holy moment - a teaching moment, too. Maybe a lesson about taking turns, about sharing, about playing the games by the rules. Maybe a chance to teach a bit about winning and losing in the right way...

Maybe. Grampa, Grampa, let's play Hungry Hippo - Have you ever played Hungry Hippo? It is one unholy interruption in life - at least it seems so playing with 3 intense and boisterous pre-schoolers... and on a grampa's knees no less. Marbles flying every where, lots of banging and shouting. There is nothing apparently holy about it - until - someone misunderstands the rules, or loses badly, and then.. then there is a teaching moment.

It happens in the most dramatic of life's interruptions, too. Illness strikes, and over and over I have heard the stories of how dealing with the illness, with the interruption, as brought new understanding of and appreciation for this precious gift of life we've been given - or not. Depending? All depending on the spirit of the person taken ill, and those close to them.

It happens in times of great stress, too. It can. It did three weeks ago in China.

A CNN reporter just happened to be in the area of the devastating earth quake. He reported on the destruction of a large Christian Church, and of how the members met on the following Sunday - under canvas stretched between poles. Praying for those they had lost, for what they had lost, and for others they knew were suffering.

And the wonder - the holy teaching moment - was when the pastor called for an offering to help other victims.... And people, deep in doubt about how God could allow such a thing to happen in their own lives, still they poured the money, poured out their gifts into the heart shaped offering basket - nearly \$80 per person.

The reporter was stunned and asked the Pastor - how can this happen - And the pastor said, our mission is from above, we will not be shaken by such interruptions as come in this world. Our life is in God who is larger and greater than these moments. We are called simply to care.

Interruptions – life is made up of interruptions of one kind or another, and these interruptions can be truly holy moments. But you know this to be true - if you're a parent, or a grandparent, or an aunt or uncle... You know the holiness of interruptions - If you're a teacher you know these moments well.

The well planned Sunday School lesson, about Daniel in the lion's den. Worked out and going well - But little Susie isn't listening – and suddenly stops you cold with her question... Teacher, where did my grampa go? He died and they put him in a box, but I miss him. Where did he go. And you have a very holy moment

I don't know how they have come in your life, or how they will. But the interruptions will come - Grampa, Grampa, will you read me a story...

And whatever I was doing can more than afford to be interrupted by that call. And that interruption could be - could be - a gift of God - a time of holy learning.

Jesus, teacher, Daddy, Gramma, - the call comes. Or maybe in a hospital waiting room. Or a grocery checkout line. Or with an aging parent. The interruptions will come - and the challenge is what we make of them.

And I know better now than I did before, how important, how vital, how holy, the interruptions in our routines in life can be. Thank you, Jesus. And I pray this awareness for those who teach here..... That there will be truly holy teaching moments in life's interruptions.... And - I pray it for you... Amen.