

Commitment

Luke 21:1-4, Psalm 37:5, Colossians 2:6,7, Romans 8:28

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On Commitment Sunday, you would expect that our sermon would focus on the lesson from Luke about the widow and the gifts of her two small coins. Ordinarily that would be the case but this morning due to circumstances in the life of our particular church, I would like us to look at the three verses I read. These three verses are like titles to chapters of our lives of faith. From Psalm 37; “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in God, God will act.” From Colossians our stewardship theme; “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” And the third one from Romans, “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, for those who are called according to God’s purpose.”

Each of these chapters in our lives of faith has many events in them. Throughout our lives we commit our way to the Lord, trusting in God...trusting that God is acting. As we commit and trust in God we are rooted and established in faith. As we are rooted and established in faith, a spring of thanksgiving wells up from within our souls, and when things happen that surprise us, or hurt us, or make us angry, or sad, we can receive comfort in the promise that all things, all things, work together for good to those who love God, for those who are called according to God’s purpose.

I have news this morning that affects all of us. Of course, I wanted to tell everyone at the same time but that simply wasn’t doable with our two services. And knowing this news and not mentioning it today, waiting for the letter to go out tomorrow didn’t seem to have integrity. So I thank you for your patience. When you hear it, some of you may be surprised, some may be sad, some may be angry, some may be glad, but I remind all of us to be confident that God is working in and through all chapters in our lives, including this one. This is difficult for me, but after my own painful struggle and prayerful discernment, that in some ways has broken my heart, out of love for you, this amazing community of faith, yesterday morning, I told the Session I plan to resign.

I came to Covenant, six and one half years ago. And serving God with you has blessed me more than words can say. I’ve learned from you. I’ve enjoyed being in community with you.

I've loved worshipping God with you. And I admit, I had selfish hopes that I could serve with you until I retired. When the former co-pastor left over a year and one half ago, I gladly embraced my right and responsibility to be your Pastor according to the Book of Order and served you with love by God's grace to the best of my abilities and gifts. But as we journeyed together, since then and through the discernment process, I came to realize that you, Covenant, cannot move into God's future while I am here representing a direct link to the past. You need to be free to move into God's amazing future for you. In order for you to do that, I need to do the right thing, and that is what I did by announcing to the Session my intention to resign. There are a lot of details to cover, but not in a sermon. I will be sending a letter out tomorrow with all the details of my end of service accompanied by a letter from the Session.

For today and in the month ahead, my last day will be December 5th, let's thank God for this gift of time we've had to journey together for awhile, and for all the ways God has blessed us. And let us, in and through this chapter of our life of faith, which is difficult for some of us, turn to God, committing our way to God, trusting God is working all things for good because we love God and God loves us, and we are called according to God's purpose. And also let us not forget, that this is just a small chapter in an ongoing story of salvation that begins in the Garden of Eden and will end in eternal paradise.

Granted, it may seem awkward to have this announcement on Commitment Sunday but what better way to proclaim the truth that we don't commit to a pastor, our commitment, our faithful stewardship, in life and for life, is to God and the kingdom of heaven on earth. You are a faithful congregation, seeking to love and serve God; you are called according to God's purpose. You have tremendous gifts that God is using and will continue to use for an incredible future witness of God's ministry and mission.

There is so much more I could say and want to say, to encourage you and build you up in your faith, but for now, I remind you that your chapters of faith are being written as you trust in God and deepen your roots of faith, abounding in thanksgiving...for God is acting as we all commit our hearts and souls, bodies and minds, time, talents and treasures to the Lord. Amen.