

**Palm Harbor United Methodist Church**  
**Sermon for August 2, 2020**  
**Rev. Sharon Patch**  
**DO It Yourself? ZACHARIAH 4:6**

Are you a do it yourselfer? Well, I try to be. I am such an independent person that I often tackle projects that it would better be left for a pro. When Jim and I bought a house in East Lake Woodlands, it had teak hardwood floors. They had been down several years and really needed to be refinished. Well, Jim was about the most unhandy man you ever saw. Brilliant but not handy. We loved each other dearly but early on in our marriage we learned that we go at projects very differently. I wanted to do them. Jim wanted to hire someone to do them. So, I didn't even mention refinishing the floors. I waited until he was out of town on business. I knew he would be gone for over a week. As soon as his plane left the ground, I hurried home and moved all the furniture to one side of the house. No small task but I wasn't worried about the floors, since I was going to refinish them anyway. A trip to Home Depot and I scored a rental sanding machine, a couple gallon of polyurethane, and an applicator. The machine was heavy and the store employees loaded it in my SUV. However, it was no small task getting it out of my car and into the house. Now, I could have asked some of the men at the church to help me, but not me. I'm too independent. It took all day just to sand the floors enough to at least breakdown the existing finish. I think that machine was possessed by the devil. It absolutely had a mind of its own. I'm trying to get it to go this way and it is determined to go that way. Finally, I got it good enough. Certainly not perfect but it was as good as I could get it. Exhausted, I left the cleanup for the next day. The next morning, bright and early, I cleaned the dust and debris and put on the first coat of finish. Then I had to go to the office to do my church work. Exhausted but feeling like I was well on my way. The next day it was the second coat of finish and a day for it to dry. Then it was time to move the furniture from side one to side two. This was where I began to think I had not really thought this through. I hadn't even considered how I was going to move the furniture back without damaging the new finish. Using area rugs under the furniture, I was able to drag and push and shove the furniture without doing great damage. Finally, I was ready to repeat the whole process on the other half of the house. Just as I was finishing the final coat, I got a call from Jim. His business had wrapped up sooner than expected and he would be getting in late that night. Kids, do you ever do something and you know you are going to get in trouble when your parents find out? Well, that was how I felt. What was I to do? I couldn't move the furniture back the floor wasn't dry yet. I didn't want to tell him what I had been doing while he was away. So, I said, "You might want to come in through the sliding glass doors in back and go to the guest room." "What!" Apparently, he'd been looking forward to getting home and sleeping in his own bed. He was tired and in no mood to walk all the way around the house and come in the back door. So, I had to confess.

He was none too pleased. I had done my best but I had tried to do too much. I had needed help but refused to ask for it. My back was killing me, my husband was annoyed, and to be honest, the floors didn't look that great. I learned that sometimes Jim was right. It would have been better to hire a professional. It would have at least been better if I had started with one room rather than the whole house. It's often better to start small.

In our scripture lesson for this morning we find the prelude to the story we read two weeks ago from Ezra. This comes from the book of Zachariah. Remember the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed and the people had been in exile. God spoke to Zerubbabel and the Babylonians gave him permission to take the exiles back to Israel. Here is the message he got from God: Zachariah 4:6: The angel said to me: This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit" says the Lord Almighty." The angel was telling Zerubbabel that God was going to empower him to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem but it would not be by his strength and power. It would be by God's power and might.

I wonder if Zerubbabel was also fiercely independent and God wanted him to understand that he couldn't do it on his own. God would provide the power that would get the job done. It would not be done in a way that would bring credit to Zerubbabel but it would be done so that people would see that it was God at work.

I kind of operate under the Mark Twain school of thought. He said, "The secret of getting ahead, is getting started." And, so I get started. I know basically where I'm going, but I often forget my compass. I forget to make sure I've got the tools I need and the help I need. I forget to check to see if my plans are God's plans.

In the movie, Evan Almighty, it's the story of Noah's ark and Noah is none too happy to be told by God that he is to build an Ark. He is yelling at God. He says, "I had plans." Morgan Freeman who plays God, laughs. Noah asks why he's laughing and he responds with a chuckle..."you had plans..."

We had plans to have a worship service in the parking lot tonight, but warnings of a potential tropical storm meant our plans had to be changed. We'll do it next week unless we have another tropical storm. Our plans apparently weren't God's plans.

Zerubbabel might have had plans for rebuilding the temple but he couldn't do it without God's plans and God's help. He could plan and study and prepare. He could even cut lumber and dig out stones, but it would take a team to get the job done. He couldn't do it on his own strength, he needed the wisdom and guidance only God could give. God had called him to accomplish this task and only God could assure that the work would be completed and that God would be glorified by it.

You see, when we try to do it all on our own, we deny others the opportunity to be part of something grand. We deny them the opportunity to use their talents and gifts, to respond to God's call on their lives.

You remember in the book of Ezra, some of the Israelites were so disappointed when they saw the foundation for the new temple that their cries nearly drown out the cries of joy that others were expressing. But, the job wasn't finished. They had merely laid the foundation. God wasn't done with them yet. Maybe this temple wouldn't be quite as big or quite as grand, but it would be completed and it would be big enough and grand, because God was leading this team of builders and God had called them and equipped them and when the job was done, it would glorify God.

So, what project are you contemplating? Is it a home improvement project? I don't recommend refinishing your floors. How about a self-improvement project? How about improving your relationship with your spouse or significant other. I know these weeks of being too much together has probably taken its toll. So, how about a project of repairing or improving that relationship. You know, you don't need to plan some elaborate vacation or some deeply romantic evening. Not that those aren't nice but they are good for maybe a day or two of good feelings but then you are back to your regular routine. How about just finding a few minutes each day to really listen to one another. How about suggesting that you pray together. It doesn't have to be some long eloquent prayer, just a few minutes giving thanks to God for this person who means so much to you.

How about a project of becoming more fit. I know these weeks of too much inactivity have taken a toll on us all. How about that COVID 10 or 20 or 30. It's too easy to snack when you are bored and stuck in the house. You don't have to go on some special diet. Those pounds came on slowly and they will come off slowly. Become mindful about what you are eating and what you are doing. Just find ways to be more active. I know it's hot and it's hard but an early morning walk is not only good for your body, it's good for your soul, especially, if you spend the time praying or just being aware of the beauty of God's creation...or being thankful for all the blessings in your life. You can improve your body and your spirit.

Maybe your project is to improve your mind. You won't do that by continuing to do the same things you've always done. How about challenging yourself? Watch a documentary on something of interest to you. Read a book on current events or a historical figure that may inspire you. Tackle learning a few words of a foreign language. Each day add another word and if you are like me, you may not become fluent but you will have added a few words to your vocabulary. You also could try memorizing a verse of scripture each day. That could improve both your mind and your spirit.

So, what if the project you want to undertake is to improve your spiritual life. Did you know that you can read through the Bible in a year if you just spend 15 minutes a day reading the scriptures? I recommend not getting bogged down in all the begats...you know so and so begat so and so, and so and so begat so and so and on and on. Just skip over those verses. Choose a version of the Bible that is easy to read and to understand. Don't be afraid to highlight important passages that speak to you. If you want to have a deeper relationship with God, you need to spend a bit more time intentionally being with God and listening to what his word has to say to you. I like to journal after I read so that I can reflect on what I have just read.

Mark Twain said, the best way to get ahead, is to start. Remember, when Jesus told Peter to come to him across the angry waters, Peter did not say, I don't have time, or I'm afraid, or I can't. He didn't procrastinate. He didn't make excuses, he got out of the boat. Remember, if you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat. If you want to improve your relationships, your body, your mind, your spiritual life, now is the time to begin. Start small, just one day at a time. Don't try to do it all alone, ask for help. Begin by putting one block on top of another until the foundation is sound and then add to it. Change doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and patience.

Whatever the project you want to tackle, begin. It's easy to procrastinate but you will never get the foundation built if you don't begin. Once you have a solid foundation for the changes you want to make in your life, begin building on that foundation, one step at a time. The most important thing is to make sure that God is heading up the project and you are just part of the team doing the work.

Better yet, take on a project that will glorify God.