

“Livin’ the Dream: Loving God!

Matthew 22:37-38

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Rev. Dave Baldrige

Palm Harbor United Methodist Church, Palm Harbor, Florida

Although the sermon series has been planned out for months....I do not actually write the specific sermon usually until the Thursday before I preach. Then I let it marinate on Friday and Saturday....and then see what happens on Sunday.

Well....this Thursday morning, as I was getting ready to go into my office at home, that I kindly refer to as the Catacombs, Sarah asked me what my sermon was on. Now I think by now you know that Sarah and I have a wonderful and strange relationship. She is wonderful and I am strange. So...I said to my dearly beloved whom I respect greatly as she was getting ready to go to Leesburg to do a Bible Study for the Conference Minister’s Mates, I said my sermon was, “Loving God!” She in her wisdom told me tell them to “Do it!” So....this morning I want to say “loving God.....do it!” (go and sit down)

Ah, but the problem and difficulty is how do we do it. It is easy to say and verbalize the words “I’m loving God.” But do our words match up with our attitude and frame of mind, and especially what we do.

From the very beginning I knew that PHUMC had done great things for God and had the potential for even extending the Kingdom of God. I came in July of 2010 and even then began talking about Revival. I preached some sermons on the “Big If’s.” If is big little word. It is conditional. If we do such and such....then such and such will happen. So as we have been talking these last few weeks about Livin’ the Dream we have mentioned that from my perspective that means that we the people are united, transformed, and well revived, rejuvenated, and revved up!!! How does that happen? Well by Livin’ the Dream and Loving God!

At the end of the service on the last song we will ask you to bring forward your commitment card and place it in one of the baskets. It will be a sign of your commitment to actually come forward in a spirit of prayer and dedication and make that commitment to Livin’ the Dream and makin’ it happen....as the commitment card says. To do that we want to continue to pray for revival.

So I used in 2010 so let me use it again.....the Recipe for Revival.

If all the sinners would fess up,
If all the sleeping folks would wake up,
And all the lukewarm would fire up,
And all the disgruntled would sweeten up,
And all the discouraged would cheer up,
And all the distressed would look up,
And all the estranged would make up,
And all the gossipers would shut up---
Then there might come a revival.

Oh beloved we talked a few weeks ago about the piece of chalk and drawing a circle and our selves individually and praying God start a revival inside this circle. Has our prayers been revived? Has our presence been revived? Has our gifts been revived? Has our service been revived? Has our witness been revived?

So this Core Value that we are talking about this morning is Loving God. This is called the Great Commandment and says we should love God with all our heart. **(image)** The Greek word is Kardia (like, cardi-ologist, cardiac) It represents the center for physical, emotional, intellectual and moral decisions. The heart is seen as the center of your decision making.

All your soul. **(image)** Do you love God with your very being? You inward most thoughts. Internally do you love God eternally?

All you mind. **(image)** Is you mind thinking daily, hourly about your love for God? Do you get consumed in your mind of your love for Him and His love for you?

All your strength. **(image)** Are you willing to expend energy in service and commitment to God to show Him your love?

Now I must pause and confess a little nuance that we find in our scripture this morning. Our scripture that Brighton read says “Love the Lord your God with all y our heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” The word strength is missing. Hmmmm. Kind of confusing. The parallel passage in the Gospel of Mark has Jesus using the word strength.

But let’s go back to the Old Testament from which Jesus quotes. It is called the Shema. This is what Carl Rinderle our Student Ministries Director is using as one of the key points in his leading of Middle School Chapel at our Westlake Christian School. Notice the Shema, Shema in literally means Listen or hear.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 Contemporary English Version (CEV)

⁴Listen, Israel! The LORD our God is the only true God⁵ So love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and strength. ⁶Memorize his laws ⁷and tell them to your children over and over again. Talk about them all the time, whether you’re at home or walking along the road or going to bed at night, or getting up in the morning.

Begins with “Shema” or Listen. Notice here it says, “all your heart, soul, and strength.” The word mind is missing. Now my mind has been missing quite a bit it seems lately, but why the differences. Well, before we get to that let’s look at the Deuteronomy passage just a little bit. Observant Jews say the Shema twice a day. And it is traditional for Jews to say the Shema as their last words and for parents to have their children say it before they go to sleep. They are reminded twice a day and before they go to sleep that they are to be loving God.

In the Shema, the Deuteronomy passage I love how it says to **(verses 6 and 7)** “tell them to your children over and over again. Talk about them all the time, whether you’re at home or walking along the road or going to bed at night, or getting up in the morning.

Beloved this is why it is important for us to have children in worship. And by children I mean the smallest to those through High School. With a unique setting and focus as an intergenerational church that needs to be heard by all....All Ages! All In! Our prayer is that these children that are hearing that now....will be telling this to their children as the next generation.

Do not be overly concerned about one passage not using the word strength. The intent is that by saying heart, soul, and mind....it indicates your entire body....who you are...your all...including your strength.

The text we used in Matthew, the parallel passage in Mark or the Old Testament passage each one uses the term all. All your heart, all your soul, all your mind. How much is all? Don't answer that....because it would seem simple wouldn't it.

This is a variation of a poem by Wilbur Reese: "I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please - not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of him to make me love a foreigner or pick beets with a migrant worker. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of a womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack. I'd like to buy \$3 worth of God, please."

How much of God do you want? Enough to not disturb your sleep, but certainly not to explode your soul. Enough of God to feel good, but not enough for practical and real transformation." Oh, just \$3 worth of God please.

Ben Witherington III, professor at Asbury Theological Seminary said this, "It has been said that too many Americans have been inoculated with a slight case of Christianity that is preventing them from getting the real thing. Perhaps this has something to do with how much of God people really want."

So how much of God do you really want? I've found through the years I've used illustrations about complete commitment and loving God all. I guess it's a theme of mine. Well....to be honest not just a theme of mine, but I believe a Biblical theme. So allow me to use an illustration from before:

A Chicken and a Pig lived on a farm. The farmer was very good to them and they both wanted to do something good for him. One day the chicken approached the pig and said, "I have a great idea for something we can do for the farmer! Would you like to help?" The pig, quite intrigued by this, said, "of course! What is it that you propose?"

The chicken knew how much the farmer enjoyed a good healthy breakfast. He also knew how little time the farmer had to make a good breakfast. "I think the farmer would be very happy if we made him breakfast." The pig thought about this. While not as close to the farmer, he too knew of the farmer's love for a good breakfast. "I'd be happy to help you make breakfast for the farmer! What do you suggest we make?"

The chicken, understanding that he had little else to offer suggested, "I could provide some eggs." The pig knew the farmer might want more, "That's a fine start. What else should we make?" The chicken looked around...scratched his head...then said, "ham? The farmer loves ham and eggs!"

The pig, very mindful of what this implied, said, "that's fine, but while you're making a contribution I'm making a real commitment!"

Beloved may I be so bold to add.....the card that says Livin' the Dream....Makin it happen....is it simply a contribution or a real commitment to accomplish the dreams and plans for Kingdom Growth.

All your heart, all your mind, all your strength. However, it's not just about money. Again another story I've used:

An American Indian chief came to a church revival series. At the altar call on the first night of the service he came and put his wampum---his "money bag" on the altar. This was symbolic of giving God his money. On the second night of the church services at the altar call the chief went forward and put his headdress on the altar. This was symbolical of giving the Lord his position, his title, his success. However on the last night of the church services the Lord again spoke to the chief. What could he give...he had turned his money over to the Lord, he had turned over his job, his power and authority.....ah, but the chief came forward on that night and laid down on top of the altar. You see the chief wanted God to have all of him. He gave his all.

A little tricky statement, not how much of God you have, but how much of you does God have?

All....like I said last week.....the Hokey Pokey has that theological verse. By the way did you know the author of the Hokey Pokey died? They had a hard time putting him in the casket...because they put his left leg in and that's when the trouble started. Oh to put your whole self in....and shake it all about...shake up your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness. Put your whole self in.....all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.

It's a matter of the heart. It's a matter of what is inside. This June a movie came out made by Pixar called Inside Out. **(image)** There was Anger, Disgust, Fear, Sadness, and the last is Joy. Now you all had your favorite character in that movie. But theologically I like the character Joy Meet Joy. **(video clip)**

Friends I like Joy.....meet Joy! Unstoppable spirit and unbeatable energy. Meet the church of "JOY" a church that has that same unstoppable spirit and unbeatable energy. Look at what God has done through you!

From the inside with Jesus our Savior....we have joy unspeakable and full of glory. (1 Peter 1:8) In 3 weeks is Advent and we know of the angels who said, "Behold, I bring you good news of great joy...(Luke 2:10) I believe Christ wants us to have joy, to be joy, to give joy.

Just as there was a movie entitled “Inside Out” so there is a song we are getting ready to sing called “Inside Out.” It will be song where we invite you to come and pray about your commitment to Christ. Are you Loving God with ALL? All your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.

This is also the time we asked you to prayerfully come forward, kneel if you feel led and pray and then place your 2016 Commitment Card.....of Makin’ it happen in one of the baskets. It’s about total commitment.....Indian Chief, magic circle of chalk, Chicken or Pig, and even the hokey pokey....God wants you to love Him with ALL. And if you love Him with all...then the resources and commitments will take care of themselves.

But it begins on the inside and comes out into wonderful ministries to glorify God. The song says,
My heart and my soul
I give you control
Consume me from the inside out Lord
Let justice and praise
Become my embrace
To love you from the inside out

Do you love God with All? From emotion commotion to commitment and devotion.....you are invited to come and give yourself to God.