

“Livin’ the Dream: Individually”

Luke 18:35-43

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Rev. Dave Baldridge

Palm Harbor United Methodist Church, Palm Harbor, Florida

“Jerry is a really positive guy, always in a good mood. When someone says to him, How are you?, Jerry answers, If I were any better, I'd be twins!

As a manager he is unique; his employees follow him from place to place because of his attitude. A natural motivator, he always encourages them to look on the positive side of any situation.

One day “Fred” (I) said to Jerry, "You can't be positive all the time. How do you do it?"

Jerry replied, "Each morning I say to myself, Jerry, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood."

"If something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it."

"Whenever someone complains to me, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side. I choose the positive side."

"Yeah, right, but it's not that easy," Fred protested.

"Yes it is" Jerry said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line is: It's your choice how you live your life."

Several years later Jerry did something you should never do in a business; he left the back door open and was held up at gunpoint by three armed robbers. While trying to open the safe, his hand, shaking from fear, slipped off the combination lock. The robbers panicked and shot him. Luckily, Jerry was found quickly and rushed to the local trauma center. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Jerry was released from the hospital with bullet fragments still in his body.

When Fred (I) saw Jerry a few months later, he (I) asked him how he was, he replied, "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Wanna see my scars?" (I) “Fred” said, "No, thanks;" but asked him what his thoughts were as the robbery took place.

"My first thought was that I should have locked the back door," Jerry replied. "Then, as I lay on the floor, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live, or I could choose to die. I chose to live."

The paramedics were great; they kept telling me I would be fine. But when they wheeled me into the emergency room and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I read in their eyes, He's a dead man. I knew I needed to take action.

"What did you do?" (I) “Fred” asked.

"Well, there was a big, burly nurse shouting questions at me", said Jerry. She asked if I was allergic to anything. "Yes", I replied. (The doctors and nurses stopped working, waiting for my reply.) I took a deep breath and yelled "Bullets!" Over their laughter, I told them, "I choose to live! Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead!" (Story found on internet)

Jerry lived....We individually have the choice to live fully. We are the ones to make the choice.

We find in scripture today one who indeed made a choice. As he made that choice he began "Livin' the Dream." That choice changed not only his attitude, but changed his life. Let's take a look at scripture (encourage you to take out your Bible or electronic device and follow along....it will also be on the screen)

³⁵ As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

As Jesus drew near to Jericho....he encounters a blind man....or I should say a blind man encounters him. Now as we explore this scripture and we look at the first verse we put up I can't help but wonder how did the blind man get there to the roadside.....xxxxx Yes, someone would have had to bring him. He was begging for life. Yes, it was what he the coins he got as people passed Bible that were able to provide a living for this man. Ironical that as he is out begging for life....He encounters someone that will give him not just daily life, not just abundant life, not just a joyful life, but an eternal life.

³⁶ And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. He most likely had sat in this same place time after time. Who knows it might have been his pew...I mean his regular place to sit and beg. With a keen sense of hearing he can tell that there is a crowd going by. He not only hears them, but perhaps he can feel and maybe even taste the dust. A crowd traveling on an unpaved road would not only have made noise but also kicked up a dust as they shuffled and moved along. Perhaps the wind carried the dust and the blind man could feel the particles of dust on his face. Who is this? Is this somebody important? Do I need to make a choice to talk and make contact with him. He quotes Bob Dylan and says, "The answer my friend is blowin' in the wind." Okay not really....but there is fresh wind a blowin.

³⁷ They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." Now he knows who it is, he must make a choice. Oh, it's just Jesus....or to make a choice of OH.....IT'S JESUS!

³⁸ And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" The fact that he calls Jesus the "Son of David" indicates that he must have heard of Jesus. Son of David is a Messianic term. Prophecy was that one was going to come that would be in the genealogy of King David. In other word the phrase son of David refers to the Messiah the Anointed one. The blind man knew enough to call Jesus by His Messianic name.

³⁹ And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" I love this verse. Those in front want the attention...how dare someone behind them shout out. They tell him to be silent. He is a persistent little guy....He knows who this person is and he makes a choice...he cries out all the more. Perhaps now shouting it out... "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁰ And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹ “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me recover my sight.”

Notice that Jesus stops. He didn't have to. He had a busy schedule. He was in the middle of a crowd. In fact, how did Jesus hear this guy anyway? Well the guy wouldn't shut up, he was persistent, but also Jesus has His ear in tune with those in need. Let me say that again, Jesus has his ear in tune with those in need.

He not only stops, but Jesus commands the man brought to him. Now this story is also mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew (20) and Mark (10)...it is what we call parallel passages. In Mark's Gospel (chapter 10:49) they tell him, “Get up; he is calling you.” This Jesus, this Anointed One, THE Messiah is calling YOU! This Mark passage identifies this blind man as Bartimaeus. And it says he threw off his cloak (his outer garment), jumped up and came to Jesus.

Now let's pause and note that Mark's Gospel says he threw off his cloak. So? What significance is that? Well beggars would often have their outer cloak laying on the ground in front of them, or in this case perhaps had it sitting on his lap or around him in such a way to hold any coins that were thrown his way. A blind man could not see where a coin was thrown, but if it were thrown in his cloak that he was holding...then at the end of the day he could carefully empty his cloak of the coins for that days living.

So for him to throw off his cloak meant the same as dropping your fishing net to follow Jesus. He was making a choice to throw away his old existence to follow Jesus. His choice. He could have refused. But he jumped to his feet...He had made, like Jerry in our opening story...a choice to live.

Jesus asks a question that is what I would call a seemingly silly question. He asks a blind man, “What do you want me to do for you?” Duh. Well...how about a new camel and a pair of sandals with a Nike checkmark on it. Of course not the blind man said, “Let me recover my sight.” Now note he says recover my sight...which makes me wonder if he had at one time previously had sight. Also he uses the title Lord...Master. “Master let me see again.”

The Matthew parallel passage says, “Jesus had compassion and touched him.”

⁴² And Jesus said to him, “Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.”

The phrase “made you well” is interesting in the Koine Greek which is the original language of the New Testament. In the Greek the word is σέσωκεν (sesōken) which literally means...get this... “to save.” You with me? Xxxxxx Your faith has saved you! Woo-hoo! Save you spiritually made you well physically.

⁴³And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Powerful verse. First....that saving was done when xxxxx??? Immediately

So notice 4 things about this particular verse.

1. He recovered his sight.
2. He followed Jesus. Now a disciple of Jesus. (Just like those disciple that left their fishing nets....he left his cloak with coins.
3. He glorified God.
4. Others gave praise to God because of what Jesus had done in and through this man.

Just as the choir sang.... “Jesus comes to save! Hallelujah a joyful story, Jesus Christ the King of Glory!”

This man was now “Livin’ the Dream.” He individually accepted the call of Jesus, responded, and followed.

Two weeks ago we talked of Livin’ the Dream: Worldwide, last week...Livin’ the Dream: Church wide. It is kind of like Google Earth....when you look at the larger picture and then continue to zoom in to the specific. And you see.....we can’t transform the world, we can’t have a God-sized dream for the church.....if individually we are not spiritually where we need to be.

In the Bible Study on Wednesday night we were studying Psalm 85. I love alliteration and there were 3 great “R” words in that passage. It says, “Restore us again....Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Restore....Revive...Rejoice.

So how do are to make a difference in the world, how do we have a church that is doing what God wants us to do....if individually we do not make that choice to follow Him. The blind man could have not been restored, revived and rejoiced...because he could have---another R word---refused.

Let’s go way back to the late 1870’s to a Methodist preacher from England by the name of Gipsy Smith. Smith conducted successful revival meetings where many were coming to know the Lord as their personal savior.

Smith was asked to explain the best method to start a revival. The answer was: "Brother, go back home, lock yourself up in a private room. Take a piece of chalk and mark a circle on the floor, get down on your knees inside the circle, pray God to start a revival inside this circle. *When this prayer is answered, the revival will be on.*"—C. A. Curry, in *Western Recorder*.

Remember Jerry at the beginning of our sermon. He made a choice. He said he was allergic to bullets and made a choice to live.

I am allergic to sin....I choose to live. I want to live as if I'm Livin' the Dream not dead in my sin, but restored, revived and rejoicing because of Jesus. Yes, I choose to be revived...individually, and it starts right here in this circle. I make the choice to follow Jesus, I want to glorify Him, I want to live individually so that that others give praise to God.

This is my circle. What about yours? Is a revival happening inside *your* circle?