

Prayer: So let your light so shine so that the world may see your good deeds and glorify God who is in heaven. Amen.

## “DECLUTTERING OUR CLOSET”

Mark 12:29-31

Sometimes we must take the time to pull all the “stuff” out of the closet and go through it piece by piece if we want to bring order to chaos.

In your house is there a closet that you refer to as the “junk closet.?” This closet is rather disorganized. It seems that everything that needs to go somewhere but does not have a place goes in this closet. People stick all sort of stuff in there and it gets pretty full after a while.

It sort of reminds me of a picture of a lady holding the door of her closet shut so that it doesn’t burst open. Is your “junk closet” that bad? Maybe not, but sometimes it seems like it is.

After a while I get tired of not being able to find what is in that closet and I take everything out and organize it. Some stuff I throw away. Some stuff I put in a different place ... where it is supposed to go. Some stuff I put back in the closet in an organized way.

While everything is out of the closet I look around and think “It will NEVER go back in there again!” But it does and I am able to find it the next time I need it. Sometimes we have to “de-clutter” our lives spiritually too.

In order to do this we have to take a bunch of stuff out of the closet we call our lives and decide if that stuff is worth keeping or if it needs thrown away. Sometimes we hide stuff in there that offends God or is unloving. By asking God to help us sort through it we can be pleasing to the Lord and our love can grow.

The Psalmist said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139)

That is what we are asking God to do too. We want Him to search us so we can seek Him. As we pray today, let’s ask God to show us ways we can love him more fully.

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” (Mat. 5:14-16)

’Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ’Love your neighbor as yourself. ’There is no commandment greater than these.”

Max Lucado describes when an electrical storm caused a blackout in the neighborhood. He felt his way through the darkness into the storage closet where he lit four candles. But as he started to take the candles out of the closet, they started speaking to him. “You can’t take me out of this closet.” I know this sounds strange but bear with me.

Max felt foolish but he answered the candles and said: “Why won’t you come out of the closet? You are meant to give light. You can’t give light in a closet.” The first candle said, “I can’t come out of the closet because I’m not ready. I need more preparation.” The second said, “I have important meetings to attend and I need to get better organized.” The third candle said, “I’m still trying to get my life together. I can be a bit of a hothead.” The fourth said, “Being a light to the world is not my gift. I am a singer and she began singing, “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.” The others soon joined in.

Finally in frustration, Max starting blowing the candles out just as they were singing, “Won’t let Satan snuff me out...”

As he walked back out into the darkness, he bumped into his wife and the story ends with this conversation. “Where are the candles?” she asked. “They don’t...they won’t work. Where did you buy those candles anyway?” “They’re church candles. Remember the church that closed down across town? I bought them there.” “Oh,” he replied. “Now I get it.”

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I hope you smiled just a little as you heard this.

- How many in our church would say: “I’m not ready. I need more preparation.”
- How many would say: “I’m not organized. We need more meetings.”
- Or: “I’m still trying to get my own life together. Fix my own problems.”
- Or: “This is not my gift. I would rather do something else.”

This in many ways is our frustration and challenge as a church. We are called to be a light to the world but so often we are keeping the light in a cluttered closet. So many other things get in front of our light. Or our light gets bottled up under a basket called, the church.

Here is a candle which has never given any light yet, and never will as it now is. Hear its reason for not giving light! It is so unfortunate that it cannot find a proper candlestick, in which to stand upright and fulfil the purpose for which it was made. Let us try to accommodate it. Here is a fine church candlestick, and we set our candle in the socket. Does it shine? No. Shall we try a lower place? It does not shine any better. We will put this candle in the most enviable position—in this real silver candlestick, of the most elaborate workmanship. It does not shine one bit the more. Neither high nor low places will make a person what they are not. I know persons who cannot get on anywhere; but, according to their own belief, the fault is not in themselves, but in their surroundings.

Herein is great encouragement, dear friends, that if you once get a light, it will spread from one to another without end. This one lighted candle would suffice to set a hundred candles shining. It may light a much finer candle than itself.

Speak of Jesus to some person who knows him not. Who can tell, but you may save a soul from death? Then carry the flame to another, and to another. Mark the years of your life by your continual diligence in spreading "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?" Those who shine by divine grace are all one in Christ Jesus.

The truth is...Every church at times contains people who would rather keep their light in the closet. Every one of us, including you and me at times would rather keep our light in the closet. So, why am I writing this? First, to make you smile and see that you are not alone. Second, to know that the answer will not come easily. Third, to know that you are part of the answer. My prayer for you this morning is to be open to God’s guidance and direction as you seek to be an example of the light and at the same time encourage others to join you. May you feel God’s presence today. May your light shine brightly today... inside at first but soon outside the closet.