

"Weary of Doing Right?"

Scripture Passages: 1) Psalm 15
2) Luke 18:18-30
3) Galatians 6:6-10

Read Galatians 6:6-10

Visiting Allen: I am incredibly thankful that I get to be a pastor. I love what I do. A couple weeks ago I had a Presbyterian from Illinois call and ask if I could visit his dad who lives here in our area. The dad is having serious health issues and struggling with his life situation. What a gift to have the freedom to just go over and visit him, talk to him about his life, hear his story, talk about God and how God works in our lives. What a joy to be available to make such visits

You make that kind of interaction a possibility. In our Book of Order it talks about the congregation's roll of providing a salary for a pastor, so the pastor has the freedom to do ministry in the community. What the Book of Order doesn't mention is the tremendous gift a group of people give their community when they provide a means for someone to do ministry in their community. There are very few full-time pastors in our area. You provide a great gift to the Paw Paw area by providing a full-time pastoral position. You provide the means for someone, like me, to have the freedom to do ministry right here in Paw Paw. That is a huge benefit to the community and to the Kingdom of God.

Great Job: I am always surprised that everyone doesn't want to be a pastor. I mean what a great job. You get to visit people and hear their stories. You get to be with people at really important times of life like: birth, sickness, baptisms, deciding to believe in God, wrestling with whether to give up on God, graduation, new jobs, loss of jobs, marriage, divorce, death, the celebration of resurrection. What an amazing gift.

I also get to be available to help people in need. Like when people show up and they need a place to stay, or they need food, or they need medical care, or they need transportation. I get to help them out. How cool is that.

I get to be involved in the community working behind the scenes helping people find new ways to work together, like the food pantry, and VBS and Young Life, and United Christian Services, and Habitat for Humanity, and the community garden. I get to help foster connections between people. How fun is that.

And of course I get to help people worship God, and wrestle with faith and belief. I can't really think of much more important work than that. I can't really believe my good fortune of being a pastor. I wouldn't want to do anything else.

Getting Tired: Even though I love being a pastor, I still get tired. I get weary. So when I read this passage in Galatians a number of months ago I was almost knocked off my feet. Paul wrote, "So let us not grow weary in doing what is right." The Message translates it, "So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good."

How often is that us? How often do we feel worn out from doing good? How often do we feel ready to call it quits from the rat race of sticking up for what is right? How often do we decide to just coast along with the crowd for a while? How often are we ready to retire from doing the right thing all the time?

We may particularly feel this way after VBS week, and fair week, and health van week? In

my case who am I going to hurt if I don't visit quite so many people, or if I don't answer the phone now and then, or return people's calls, or skip a few meetings, or stop trying to connect people's gifts with needs in the community. I mean who would really notice?

Deb's Dad: Deb's dad used to give me a hard time when we lived in Leadville. He used to say to me, "You ruined the perfect job." Of course people always make comments about pastors only working one day a week. In Leadville that could have been true when we first moved there. When we moved there, there was nothing going on in that church or in the community. Well it didn't take long before I was plugging away at my normal 60 to 80 hours a week. In any community, anywhere, there are always endless opportunities for ministry. As I had the gift of working with Elaine and Laurie I told them, "The hardest part of being a pastor is deciding what you aren't going to do ever day." That is so true! There is never a shortage of ways to "do good" in a community.

David and The Rich Man: It seems to me that both David in Psalm 15, which we read at the beginning of the service, and the Rich Man who asked Jesus about getting into to heaven, which Donna read for us a few minutes ago, were both weary of doing good and were wondering whether they could take a break.

We don't know when in David's life he wrote Psalm 15, we don't know how young or old the rich man was, but both at one moment in time were wondering whether they had done enough. Had they been good enough to get into heaven? Had they done enough good things? Had they lived a moral enough life? Had they loved their neighbor well enough? Or was there still more to do? Could they sit back and rest on their laurels? Could they retire from living faithful lives? Had they loved God enough?

The Response: Of course God's response to David, Jesus' response to the rich man, and Paul's response to the Galatians, was the same, "Don't stop, don't retire, don't go with the flow, don't rest on your laurels."

Jesus points out just how hard this is, "He says it is like trying to get a camel through the eye of a needle." He goes on to say, "You can't do this on our own you must trust in God." Paul says, "Be very sure now, you who have been trained to a self-sufficient maturity, that you enter into a generous common life with those who have trained you, sharing all the good things that you have and experience."

Paul's Two Points: Paul makes two critical points here. First, as followers of Jesus we are seeking to grow in maturity to the place where living a generous common life becomes more and more natural for us. The second point he makes is that we live in community with others who are striving for the same maturity so that we can support one another along the way.

Paul rightly realized not only how hard this life of loving God and neighbor is, but he also realized how lonely this life is. When we live this way, we truly are strangers in a foreign land. We are truly going against the flow. No wonder it is so easy to become weary, tired, and fatigued.

The Church: Every morning as soon as we get out of bed we start sowing seeds. That is simply the reality of everyday. The question is, "What kind of seeds are we sowing?" Will the seeds grow into weeds, or will the seeds grow into a harvest for the Kingdom of God?

Sowing seeds for the Kingdom is not an easy task. Thankfully God gives us each other for support, encouragement, friendship, and accountability. We are not alone on the journey and of course God's very Spirit dwells with us every moment and every step of the way.

Conclusion: So let's not just go with the flow, or allow our weariness to win out. Instead let us embrace this beautiful life of loving God and loving neighbor, so that everyday we are planting

healthy seeds for the Kingdom of God. And let us be a people who understand the gift of our life together. We are not alone on this journey. We are here to encourage each other, so that we do not grow weary of “doing good”. Amen.