

082319

I. My Notes... WWC message 8/25

II. Series: Active Faith

a. Title: An Active Faith Lives Free

b. Text: Galatians 5:1-6

c. Quote: Free will is not the liberty to do whatever one likes, but the power of doing whatever one sees ought to be done, even in the very face of otherwise overwhelming impulse. There lies freedom, indeed.
- George Macdonald

III. Communion Thought

a. If you've ever seen the movie "Schindlers List," you might remember a clandestine wedding that takes place one night in the barracks. The marriage is between 24-year old Joseph Bau, prisoner number 69082, and Rebecca Tannenbaum, the manicurist of Amon Goeth, the ruthless Nazi who ruled over the camp in which they were held, Plaschow Prison Camp.

Later, it was decided to move everyone to Auschwitz. Oscar Schindler had gotten permission to open a munitions plant in Czechoslovakia and was wanted his workers to go with him. Late in the game, because of a favor owed her by some prominent local Jews, Rebecca got to add a single name to the list of people who would be going to the munitions plant. She got to save someone—and she chose Joseph. Even more amazing about this story is that they both survived the war, were reunited, and lived to be married 54 years largely in part

because Rebecca was willing to sacrifice herself, so her husband might live.

This was an incredible reminder of what Jesus did – he sacrificed Himself to add a name to the list of those who will inherit eternal life. But the amazing part of Jesus’ story is that he adds more than one name to that list. Anyone who chooses to believe on His name is added.

At communion we remember, Jesus dying on the cross, so our names could be written in the book of life. John 20:31 says “...you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

IV. Introduction

- a. There’s a story told about a Professor of biology who was an atheist. Every year he began his lectures on evolution by asking if any of the students were religious. When they identified themselves, he boasted that by the end of his course they’d all know evolution was the truth and would have become atheists. Over the years many a student lost their faith during his course.

One day our atheist professor was walking through the forest, marveling at the wonderful world evolution has given us. His wondering was interrupted by a loud growl. He turned to see a large, hungry and cranky grizzly bear charging towards him. The professor began to run, but it was no use, the bear was too fast. The professor tripped and next thing he knew the grizzly was standing above him,

one foot on his chest, his paw ready to strike. With terror in his eyes the atheist professor realized he was about to experience survival of the fittest first-hand.

At that point he cried out “God help me!”

Time stopped! The bear froze. The forest was silent. A bright light shone down upon the atheist and a voice boomed from the heavens, “You deny my existence for all of these years, teach others I don’t exist, and even credit creation to a cosmic accident. Do you expect me to help you out of this predicament? Am I to count you as a believer?”

The atheist professor looked up into the light, “It would be hypocritical of me to suddenly ask you to treat me as a Christian now...but perhaps could you make the bear a Christian?”

“Very well,” the voice said.

The light went out and the sounds of the forest resumed. And then the bear dropped its right paw, brought both paws together, bowed its head and spoke: “Lord, for this food which I am about to receive, I am truly thankful.”

- b. A few weeks ago, we began a series called Active Faith. We have looked at how obedience is a choice and it reveals our faith. We learned that active faith makes a difference in the lives of those it touches. And an that faith lives grateful - it is expressive and worships the Lord God in real and practical ways. Living your faith is not something that is only confined to the four walls of the church. Leading and helping are great, doing things to serve is part of what we are called to do as believers. Active Faith is an everyday, outward

expression of your love for God and what He is doing in your life. It's a choice that every believer must make - each day, and this choice impacts (influences) everyone around us.

c. Let's look at a few habits (choices, behaviors) that can assist us as we seek to find ways to live out our faith... each day. (1) Find a "quiet time" each day. This is restorative, this is important. We need to set aside time to spend with the Lord and find a few moments in the hectic pace of a day for a "breather". (2) Serve others. It is human nature to want recognition, to seek appreciation. But serving others is special and can be done in innovative and practical ways. Love isn't something that is arranged or planned, it is a response to the love we have experienced and come to know (3) Character matters. Integrity is important. Our faith gives us an awareness of those things that go on inside us. It helps us understand how decisions impact our heart. Those who live out their faith daily always keep an eye on their character. (4) Create a community. Creating community is about adding value to people's lives. It recognizes that people are not to be used but loved. (5) Find joy and importance in the simple things. God is to be celebrated, always. He cares and knows what is needed, in each moment. Joy is our strength and it comes from the simple steps taken.

d. Here's the catch for most - all of what I am talking about is a choice. We choose a growing relationship with the Lord... we choose obedience and to be the one who makes a difference. We choose to live grateful. It's the freedom we have, as humans. Freedom is the thing which God intentionally gave man. In talking about freedom Phillip Yancey (author, speaker) said, "God's terrible insistence on

human freedom is so absolute that he granted us the power to live as though He did not exist, to spit in His face, to crucify Him.” God loves us enough to allow us the freedom to choose. His desire (yes, God has desire too) is for us to find peace, live joyfully, and spend eternity with Him.

- e. One of my “go to” passages is in the Gospel of Matthew. *“Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Accept my teachings and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest for your lives. The teaching that I ask you to accept is easy; the load I give you to carry is light.”* **(Matthew 11:28-30 NCV)**. We have been set free to choose the load we are going to carry. Believing in Jesus Christ brings freedom from the law and its enslaving power. No longer is there worry about being good enough or doing enough good works or keeping enough laws to be acceptable to God. Jesus will teach all a different way, a better way

V. Text

a. Galatians 5:1-6 (MSG)

Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you. I am emphatic about this. The moment any one of you submits to circumcision or any other rule-keeping system, at that same moment Christ's hard-won gift of freedom is squandered. I repeat my warning: The person who accepts the ways of circumcision trades all the advantages of the free life in Christ for the obligations of the slave life of the law. I suspect you

would never intend this, but this is what happens. When you attempt to live by your own religious plans and projects, you are cut off from Christ, you fall out of grace. Meanwhile we expectantly wait for a satisfying relationship with the Spirit. For in Christ, neither our most conscientious religion nor disregard of religion amounts to anything. What matters is something far more interior: faith expressed in love.

- b. Jesus Christ is the great Liberator!
- c. We have the freedom to choose how and where we will stand
- d. The bondage of sin or the freedom (and comfort) of obedience
- e. In John 8 Jesus reminds us that choosing sin is choosing slavery but sonship (being related) brings with it freedom (see vs. 34-36)
- f. Faith highlights God's ability - especially in my weakness, my inability
- g. It's not about my effort - my strength - my will. Living with an Active Faith is living in dependence on God's strength and ability

VI. It's Not About the Rules

- a. The Apostle Paul warns that rule-keeping squanders God's gift of Grace
- b. Jesus said, *"Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished."* (Matthew 5:17-18 CSB)

- c. Jesus begins by stressing that His purpose is not to destroy the Law, but to establish its real purpose.
- d. He is dealing with the attitudes of the religious elite. Their adherence to the rules didn't address the heart of the matter
- e. Jesus wanted the attitude of a disciple to deal with deeper matters, the root issues for which the Law was intended, those which the scribes and Pharisees had missed.
- f. The Law, rules, commandments show us one thing - that we need help, that we need a Savior

VII. It's Not About Religion

- a. Religion is defined as “a system of faith” and a “pursuit” of what one may feel has supreme importance
- b. “Believers of religion will be charitable with time and money, hoping to relieve some of the burdens a society faces, such as hunger, clothing needs, housing needs and overall spiritual counseling. Without the religious frameworks that guide these actions, many people may not feel morally obligated to address societal problems, making religion important to society and its people.” (www.reference.com/world-view)
- c. There are some good things that happen because of religion. Because of “church”
- d. Universities and Hospitals were built. People have been helped
- e. Look at one of the stories that Jesus told about the “religious”.

- f. In the story we call the Good Samaritan, Jesus pointed out that the religious leaders passed by a man who had been robbed and injured in order to “follow the rules”.
- g. It was a man who wanted to help, he saw a need and did his best to meet it. That man showed love, he acted on his faith. And Jesus told others to, “*go and do the same*” (ref. Luke 10: 37)
- h. Following the rules only gets us so far
- i. Relationships sustain us. They help and support. It is in relationships that we discover love

VIII. It's About Love

- a. Paul told the Galatians (and us), “*For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love.*” (Galatians 5:6 NLT2)
- b. The focus of God's people should remain on faith in Christ, expressed in love. That, writes Paul, is the only thing that counts.
- c. Active Faith and love are linked
- d. In the hard times, due to the challenges of the day, we are encouraged to show our faith through love.
- e. **2 Thessalonians 1:3 (CSB)**

We ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, since your faith is flourishing and the love each one of you has for one another is increasing.

- f. These are the words of Paul to a church, a group of believers, that were being treated badly and wrong
- g. Love identifies believers
- h. Being honest, left on our own, love (serving, being kind and compassionate, giving) doesn't happen easily. Real love is supernatural
- i. And those things speak to others

IX. Last Thought

- a. Paul was reminding believers that if you look at your worthwhile efforts, or to the results of your abilities then work and worth of what Christ did in dying for your sins and obtaining your salvation will be of no use. Depending on your abilities and accomplishments is rejecting Jesus
- b. Plain and simply said, an Active Faith reveals God - who He is and His desire for a relationship with others - to those around each of us
- c. Perhaps you aren't sure how to explain the Lord God to others
- d. It was just over a year ago that we had a series of messages taking us through 1 John. I am sure you remember this...
- e. **1 John 4:16-18 (CSB)**

And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. In this, love is made complete with us so that we may

have confidence in the day of judgment, because as he is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears is not complete in love.

- f. God is love - He is generous, kind, compassionate, accepting and understanding
- g. God is faithful - accepting Him as Lord keeps us in “right standing” (righteousness) with Him. And He protects those in His family
- h. His Love is perfect - God’s intention is for our best. Now, others may argue with that because their view is on the circumstances before them in life. God wants each of His kids to be fulfilled, live at peace, with joy. All this involves our choice...
- i. Let’s Pray
- j. The blessing today is a bit different... Life - Active Faith is an opportunity, learn from it. Living faith is beautiful - admire it. A life marked by faith is precious - do not destroy it. Active faith is a gift - give it. And a life lived by faith is a challenge that is fulfilling - choose it!
- k. Grace first... Grace Always
- l. Live simple, live practical, love eternally