November 1st , 2019

Springfield Presbyterian Church

Ordinary Time

10:30 am

A Cheerful Treasure

I. It’s Worth Retelling the Tale

Some of you have already read my Pastor’s Page in our Newsletter, so this part will be a bit of a repeat for you, but it is a worthwhile story to share again and again.

I shared a story about my father, who has been a lifelong Presbyterian and has served in the office of Deacon. His heart, his compassion, and his willingness to serve the church as a means of serving Christ, alongside my mother’s faith, has always instilled in me a sense to serve the church as well. My dad, before his job as a steel worker, earned a degree in accounting, and from that knowledge-base, he has always been known to make sense of dollars and figures quicker than most. He currently serves at our home church on the financial team, where the budget numbers and item lines somehow make complete sense to him.

My father and I do not share that special quality, that love of numbers, but I’ve been around him long enough to see that the numbers truly are part of a bigger picture for him. The numbers are a reflection of where your heart is, where your investment lies, and where you see potential and energy.

And all of this is very endearing, except for the fact that a few years ago, when a guest preacher was in town, the preacher dug into our text from Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians. He shared with the congregation that they should be joyful, cheerful givers, ones to shout, ‘WAHOO’! when the plate comes around, because giving of yourself and of your gifts is a celebration of the Spirit in action.

Unfortunately, much to my chagrin, or embarrassed delight, when the plates are passed around the pews, my dad still shouts a loud, ‘WAHOO’ for everyone to hear and for it to echo in the sanctuary walls. And, in case you didn’t know, dad is an extroverted Jersian, his voice can carry. When my parents come to visit next week and sit among us in the pews at Springfield, I can almost guarantee I will hear a loud, ‘WAHOO’ from my father, who carries the tradition on.

II. Inspired to Give

You’ll see my head in my hands, and my cheeks red, but ultimately my father makes a good point. He understands that the church is one that is not stagnant, but in motion. He understands that his treasure here on earth will not abide with him always, so he is smart about his investments. He understands that in order to enact change and create new ideas and innovation, that change often comes from monetary change.

And so, today, I ask that you hear the Scriptures aloud speak to your heart. What are your treasures? What are those things that bring you great joy – and I mean treasures in many senses of the word – treasures like the old doll that you received when you were a little girl, or maybe the treasure of your family sitting around at the dining room table, holding hands, sharing a moment of prayer before a meal. Think about those treasures, and give thanks. Just take this moment, a moment of quiet, and give thanks.

Now that we have centered ourselves in a place of gratitude and thankfulness, I ask you this: is this church, Springfield Presbyterian, is this a treasure of yours? Is this family, the body of Christ at work in the community and the world -- is this a treasure? Is the work of the Spirit in new and creative and thoughtful ways – is it a treasure to you? If it is, then we invest in the treasure, with gratitude and thankfulness for the ways God has already worked and will continue to work, not only here while we live and breathe, but beyond us as a legacy.

III. Well Chuffed

Bob Steppling sent out a letter to all of you, sharing all of the wonderful things that are happening at Springfield and inquiring whether you will continue to join us on the journey. He mentioned some of the wonderful things that are happening at Springfield, but as your pastor, I am happy to boast about what the Spirit is up to.

If you want to take a long view at the ministry of Springfield, we see 183 years of ministry. On the hot days where there was no air conditioning, people would still come to worship. There was a time when black and white folks would worship together, with black people in the balcony and white on the main level before the days of the civil rights movement, a truly progressive act in its own day. There was a time when we were asked to move our church onto Route 32, so we might be a more visible presence, but the people here who had invested in this community continued to say, ‘This is our home. Whatever we need to do to keep our home, we will.’ As we offer our stewardship pledges today, we recognize that we come from a legacy of strong-willed Presbyterians who longed for generations to be able to stand and sing and sit and pray and worship in the space. They invested in Springfield so that we might be able to worship here today.

If I take the shorter view, the view of these past few years and into the future, I recognize that in the time that we have been together, as in, you and me, we have done so much good. We may have had flubs or failures here and there, but you have trusted me and moreso, trusted the Spirit and with joy, we’ve seen new things come to light. We’ve seen a community invested in C.I.A. camp week where we ask not only our children to participate, but our community to really come together and witness to God at work in our world. We give thanks for the work of the choirs, for all our mission work – and I’ll tell you, we have to get this out on paper, but the Mission and Outreach committee wrote down all that we do – and for this wee church on a hill, we do a lot. In order for us to continue these ministries, we must invest in them, both in time and money, and in heart and energy.

IV. A View of the Future

You might want to say, ‘Well, we’ve done all these wonderful things, let’s keep the boat afloat and all will be well.’ Yet, I met with our elders yesterday for a retreat and there is much on the horizon yet for Springfield. One of the main topics we brought up is not a secret to anyone – we do not have a facility space to offer meetings such as AA, or PFLAG, or a general gathering space. We do not have, as many churches do, a fellowship hall, where we can place resources on bulletin boards. This has been a known fact for years and in the three and a half years I’ve been here, I’ll tell you that I’ve heard so many ideas across the board of how to ‘fix’ the problem. Don’t worry, we haven’t made any plans yet, and have no doubt, the congregation as a whole will have its say, but for Springfield to continue to be a thriving church, we need to invest in its future and that will create some changes along the way.

For me, this is exciting work. Perhaps for you, it’s exciting and scary – all work of the Spirit is and should be, but as our ancestors of Springfield worked hard to keep this building here for us to meet and worship, we also have a duty to invest in our present day work as well – and look towards the future of generations who we hope and pray will find Springfield as a home for spirit, body, and mind. Amen.