

August 7, 2016



## "It's Never Too Late!"

Sermon by Rev. Dorothy Bimber Worley

Luke 12:32-40

*"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. "Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. "But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."*

Many of you remember the wonderful Lenten dinners we used to have here on the Wednesdays between Ash Wednesday and Holy Week. Each Wednesday, following dinner, we would gather here in this sanctuary for music and a guest speaker.

One year, our guest speaker was Tim Hansel, author of the book, *You Gotta Keep Dancin'*. Ten years before, Tim had a climbing accident in the High Sierras. After his accident, he lived in continuous physical pain. As Tim spoke that night, it was obvious that God's LOVE was working powerfully in his life, helping him discover the real meaning of joy. That night, we went home knowing that it is never too late to allow God's LOVE to be at the core of our being and to be filled with joy. And it's never too late to enable others to experience God's LOVE as they too follow Jesus as their Lord.

We laughed as Tim joked with us about getting old:

- o You know you're getting old, when you bend down to tie your shoes and you ask, "What else can I do while I'm down here?"
- o You know you're getting old, when whatever doesn't hurt doesn't work!"
- o You know you're getting old, when you go upstairs to do something, and you ask, "Why am I up here?"
- o And there were more; ask me!

I'm beginning to understand his jokes now, some thirty years later! I've been doing this "retirement" thing for over ten years now! My earlier perceptions of retirement and old age were drastically different from the reality of my present life. Relaxation? Sometimes.

Recreation? Sometimes. Traveling? Occasionally – mostly one-day and weekend getaways. Years ago, I believed that "retirement" and "old age" were when you retired at about 60 years or older. And certainly 70 was "extremely" old!

Well, here I am at 74! I keep hearing references to persons my age as being "elderly"! And my definition of "elderly" is someone who has become inactive and unable to do much physically or in any participatory way. Therefore, at this point in time, I do not qualify as an elderly person! And neither do any of you here this morning! I am finding myself busier than ever and constantly asking God, "What now?", "What is next?" and God shows me that it's never too late to be in ministry and mission for His Son Jesus Christ.

God has called each one of us here this morning, and God has a message and a mission for each one of us. How are you fulfilling God's purpose for your life?

When Pastor Patricia called several weeks ago and asked me to preach, our world was in the midst of intense violence! So much pain! So many questions! And all of this in the midst of political instability and the coming presidential elections! And the situation hasn't changed, has it! What a time to pray and draw closer to God! Experiencing shock, pain, anger, grief, fear, and disillusionment, we seek signs of hope and we ask God to help us not to give up!

I want to put in a plug for our Sunday morning Lectionary Bible Study; this class would love to have more of you involved with them in studying God's Word. We as United Methodists, along with other Christian denominations, follow what is called a lectionary. That is, over a three year period, we have Bible readings that cover most of the Bible. Each Sunday has four readings – an Old Testament, a Psalm, an Epistle, and a Gospel reading. Although the Gospel is the only lesson being read, and parts of the psalm used in our Call to Worship, I will refer to other readings in our lectionary's assigned readings during these current weeks. They certainly speak to how we as Christians can live in hope for better tomorrows!

Our wounded world is calling out for healing. Our prayers cry out to God – sometimes in silence, sometimes in shouts of anger, sometimes in tears, and often asking if there is any hope for our wounded and warring world. Through the words of the Prophet Isaiah, God tells us that we can work with Him in "putting an end to such evil, and in learning to do good." (Isaiah 1:16-17) And Isaiah calls out to us to:

- o Seek justice
- o Defend the orphan
- o Plead for the widow

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, St. Paul calls us to faith and believing. And Jesus reminds us that it's never too late: "Be dressed for service and keep your lamps lit."

Two weeks ago, Pastor Robert reminded us that, "we often find God in the midst of our messes." He also reminded us that the Christian life is about transformation. "The Christian Spiritual life is an inside life turned outside. The peace in our inner-most

being is turned outside for the transformation of the world.” He talked about this kind of living and loving as the “core” of who we are as followers of Jesus Christ. It’s what our lives look like when God’s LOVE is at the very core of our being.

Before today’s lesson, Jesus has been teaching about the place of material possessions in life. He was talking to persons who had an abundance of possessions. He taught that as His followers, we should find our happiness and joy in giving out of what God has given us. This goes hand-in-hand with Jesus’ Great Commandment to each one of us – We are called to LOVE God, self, and others with all that we have – with every fiber of our being. This is what it means to have LOVE - God’s LOVE – at the “core” of our being!

In today’s Gospel Lesson, Jesus tells us not to be afraid: “Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights in giving you the Kingdom.” Whatever happens in this life, keep your eyes fixed on God’s Kingdom and God’s LOVE, and God will be with you every step of the way! Are you truly ready to place all of your life in God’s hands?

Next, Jesus tells His followers: “Sell your possessions and give to those in need...Where your treasure is, there your heart will be too.” How we use our possessions /all of our resources is directly connected to our commitment to build God’s Kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. Next week’s Gospel Lesson will teach us that those of us who have been “given much” will be required to “give” much! Are you ready?

And finally, Jesus’ “Call to Action”: “Be dressed for service, and keep your lamps lit...You must be ready, because the Human One is coming at a time when you don’t expect. him . “Jesus was talking about the Second Coming of Jesus. But we need to equally think of this passage as a call to be ready for God’s call to us at any time and in any place. We must keep our sleeves rolled up and be ready for service! What do you need to do to be ready?

Last week’s reading from Colossians reminded us: “So live in Christ Jesus the Lord in the same way as you received him. Be rooted and built up in Jesus, be established in faith, and overflow with thanksgiving just as you were taught.” We are to stay grounded in our Christian faith, and we are to practice having God’s LOVE at the very core of our being.

We live in a wounded and warring world! Is there hope? Can our world change? Yes!  
We are Easter People – People of The Resurrection!  
We are not only “believers in Jesus”, but “followers of Jesus”!  
We are participants in the building and “re” building of God’s Kingdom here on earth, as it is in heaven.

We have come here this morning, because God has called us; the Lord is also calling us to His Table. God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will be with us, as we partake of the Bread and the Cup. We will also be surrounded by and strengthened by all of the saints who have gone before us; what power comes to us as we come to the Lord’s Table!  
God is great! God is powerful! And God is right here with us, calling us into closer relationship with Him, as well as to new and renewed ministry and mission in the name of Jesus Christ.

Will you listen? Will you hear? Where is God calling you?  
Will you go where God is calling you?  
I’d love to talk to you about it!  
It’s never too late! God calls us – young, middle-aged, old, active, inactive, full of faith, and struggling to believe. God has a purpose, a mission, and a ministry for each of us.

We see and hear the stories of our first responders in this wounded world, and we pray for them. First Responders go where they are called – they often run right into danger!  
Most People do the opposite – they stay as far away from danger as possible! As Christians, we are called to live as First Responders – God calls us into tough and often dangerous places! May we be ready and willing to answer His call.

I close with this prayer from Tim Hansel’s book, *You Gotta Keep Dancin’*; let us pray:  
Giver of life, Creator of all that is lovely,  
Teach me to sing the words to Your song;  
I want to feel the music of living  
And not fear the sad songs  
But from them make new songs  
Composed of both laughter and tears.

Teach me to dance to the sounds of Your world and Your people,  
I want to move in rhythm with Your plan.  
Help me to try to follow Your leading, to risk even falling –  
To rise and keep trying,  
Because You are leading the dance. Amen.

Author Unknown  
Taken from, *You Gotta Keep Dancin’*,  
Tim Hansel  
(1941 – 2009)