

# Sermon Text for April 29, 2018

Hosea 1, Romans 13:11-14  
“If it feels good, do it!”

We had an incredibly meaningful Houston 2.0. We had four churches represented with us from the Strasburg Ministerium. Want to guess what assignment we had? We were rebuilding a parsonage that was going to be used by missionaries who are responsible for overseeing the rebuilding of Houston. Here was a church, a Lutheran Church that was dying, just looking inward, just worrying about making the bottom line and had zero outreach. Along came the flood, and all of a sudden they realized what they had forgotten, when you only think about yourself, you will be the only one thinking about you. But when you start thinking about the community, then it is as if God honors that and builds opportunity after opportunity for you to serve. Our ministerium was working to rebuild a Lutheran church where Episcopalian missionaries were going to be housed to rebuild Houston. God has a great sense of humor, and we had a great sense of purpose.

But that is a great theological statement. It is not unusual for a church to forget what it is that motivates you and what your mission and what your ministry is. We may ask how did Adam and Eve, the judges the kings, the prophets, the people of Israel, the disciples, the early church, how did we forget what God has told us? When you do it unto the least of these, it is as if you are doing it to me.

Last week we learned another lesson from Scripture that we so often forget and that is how important it is to act in love to our neighbor which can only stem from the realization that we love ourselves because Christ first loved us.

Today, Paul literally tells us in Romans to wake up! God tells us to rejoice, God has told us that our lives when put them in Christ's hands need to be a celebration. As Christians we should be able to live our lives fully, to drink deep from the well of life and not be fearful. As Christians with Christ as our guide the statement if it feels good, do it, should be our statement because of the joy that we have in Christ. I better explain that statement. Paul is going to help me in Romans 13.

## **READ SCRIPTURE**

When I was a pastor in Florida we had a group of people, the youngest was 18 and the oldest was 79 and we called ourselves the extreme Presbyterians. We had a

whole list of things we were going to do together: sky dive, swim with sharks, just those things that are on your bucket list that you would probably never do unless you were with someone. The first one was sky diving. When we arrived we saw a 30 minute video on how if things don't work out they are not liable. We took a 5 minute instruction class, and then we were ready. We climbed in the plane, an absolutely tiny dilapidated plane that used to be owned by a couple of brothers name Orville and Wilbur. It was a mess. The pilot, my instructor, and two teens were in the plane with me, each of us jam packed like sardines. As we were climbing I realized something quite shocking. I was the only one in that plane without a parachute.

As soon as I realized that two thoughts crossed my mind. The first I can't say in church, and the second was now that I'm here, relax, enjoy, there is nothing you can do one way or the other. Just trust that the people who are responsible know what they are doing, and if they don't, you don't so don't worry about it. We reached 10,000 feet or about 2 miles in the air. I was told I would free fall for about 5,000 feet or 45 seconds and then float down the rest. My instructor snaps me onto him, he is behind me and I am in front. It was the closest I have ever been to a man in my life, far closer than I ever wanted to be to begin with.

He opened the door right next to us, here we are 10,000 feet up in the air with the door open and out on the side wheel of the plane I see a one foot by six inch ledge and he says step out. At the moment another thought ran through my mind, Why? I have a good family, a great church, I like people, I know my golf game needs improvement but is this really necessary. Next thing I know I am out on the edge surfing this plane and we tumble head over heels in to nothing.

For the next three seconds we tumbled and I thought I was going to die. That first step and the initial tumbling was so scary I didn't know if I was going to make it. But then just as fast, there was exhilaration, bliss, euphoria. Besides my screams of joy it was absolutely still and quiet up there. It was so exhilarating not having the burden or the responsibility, and yet having that trust in that man who was way to close to me.

The 18 year old had an instructor was not as young as mine, he was a bit overweight and her last thought out of the plane was, what if he has a heart attack? What a difference it makes when you have unconditional trust in the one pulling the chord, steering you on the path, taking you to safety. Do you hear a sermon in there someplace?

That confidence, exhilaration, good feeling because you did it, you allowed yourself to trust so you had an experience of a lifetime brings us to our Scripture today in Romans. Paul tells us to live for the future and that can only be done if we trust the one who has our future in his hands and is guiding us in the present.

In verse 11 Paul says what time is it? What time is it? It's salvation time. Wake up, because today we are one day closer to salvation than yesterday and tomorrow you will be one day closer yet than you are today. Every single day of your life has to be a day that you are able to carpe manana. To seize tomorrow. All over Scripture Paul emphasizes this living for the future that allows our present to be one filled with joy and celebration. Look at Ephesians 5:4, "Sleeper awake, rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you." Jesus constantly is telling people not to worry about the past or even the present or the future because there is one who is pulling the chute and is in control so this life is to be enjoyed. Mark 13:35, therefore keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come. Matthew 24:42 Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Being able to live for the future creates within us an ability to forget our past. Have you ever found yourself thinking about the past and what you would have done differently. After a while it becomes obsessive. I am convinced that depression is onset by our inability to escape from the past or an overwhelming fear of the future because we think that it is in our hands. Those who are asleep as they live their lives are those who are not able to let go of their past and strive for the future that Christ has laid out for us. Stop beating yourself up, and start healing with Christ.

Paul says this in verse 12 when he states the night is far gone. When Naomi was young I was reading the Narnia series with her and as we got to the point where Aslan the lion is killed and we had to go to bed. Well, that was not fair and she got all excited because she wanted to see how the story was going to end. We couldn't go to sleep with Aslan being dead and not knowing the ending. We stayed up for the last three chapters and the end of the book.

We know the end of the story. We know that Jesus is going to come back and God will redeem God's creation and this my friend gives us great hope for tomorrow. We can live for the future because we know that it ends with salvation. Just think if we didn't know the ending, it would be up to us to create an ending. What a tragedy that certainly would be. Some of us are living as if the ending is up to us and we wrest from

God's hands the controls and try to land that parachute ourselves when we have no experience and no know how on how things are supposed to be done. What a relief it is to hand the controls over to Christ.

Paul goes on in verse 12 and tells us to live for the future, to enjoy and wake up in life by taking off, disrobing, tearing of the works of darkness and putting on the armor of light. This is a life transformation that takes place in all of us when we allow God to take over control of our life. Paul talks in these same exact terms in Ephesians 6:10-11, finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power, put on the whole armor of God.

What happens when you put on the armor of light, or the armor of God? The past is finished and gone, there is a whole new world out there. Imagine how good it would feel if you could live your life knowing someone else has the parachute. You don't have to worry or wonder about the future but rather look forward to it. It would feel good. Imagine being able to shed the past and all of the guilt, the anxiety, the sin. All that you brought into the church today that is a remnant for the past leave it in the pew. Christ has already cleaned you up, it's already taken care of.

Campolo told us about a plane trip that he took and across from the isle from him was this terribly annoying 4 year old girl who was so excited to see her daddy. The whole 4 hour trip she was clapping her hands and kicking his chair and saying, I'm going to see my daddy. The stewardesses were a bit embarrassed so they kept feeding this kid crackers and peanuts and soda. Now, you wouldn't think that crackers and peanuts and soda would create any kind of odor. But the plane hit some turbulence, and it wasn't long that those snacks came back up, not quietly, but in wave after wave after wave.

After about 15 minutes of a stinky onslaught, Campolo hears again, I'm going to see my daddy. He couldn't wait to get off the plane, he did, but his curiosity got the best of him and he had to wait at the end of the ramp to see who this daddy was after a, and how he was going to react to little puke face. There was daddy looking anxiously down the runway, the little sees him, squeals out Daddy and runs into his arms. The dad did not even notice the smell, the vomit, the dirt that covered his little girl from head to toes.

I don't care what condition you are in, what type of filth you are a part of. He will forgive, embrace, love. Liberated from the burdens of a sinful past, the Christian strides with confident step into a future wholly reliant upon Christ. Amos did that. God

told him to marry a prostitute in order to give an example of what it is like to be the husband of Israel. Time after time we turn our back on God, but God commands Amos to go back and love his wife, even if she was unfaithful. God comes back to us, time after time, even after we are unfaithful. Our sin, the stench of our lives does not deter God from loving us.

Once liberated, Paul tells us to live honorably. Once you have experienced the light, don't go back to the darkness. The past is finished and gone, don't wander back. This term honorable is used one other time in the Bible and it is used to describe Joseph of Arimathea, remember Joseph who took the body of Christ and buried it in a newly cut tomb. The one who was well connected, influential, wealthy, yet sacrificed it all in order to bury his savior. He had his eyes on the future, it felt right, it felt good to do what he did, so he did it.

You know, some of us have a past that we want to bury and the statement if it feels good, do it, offends us because it conjures up times when all that mattered was what felt good. But how good did it really feel to live with the guilt. How good did it feel when you woke up the next morning. How good does it feel now with people that you know and that you love surrounding you. I guarantee you that nothing you do in this life can feel as good as being liberated in Jesus Christ.

Others of us have lived lives where nothing has really felt good and we may be asleep because we are so concerned about our salvation or doing the proper thing that any mistake or misstep that we may take is going to make us fall out of grace. If it feels good, in Christ, do it. Go skydiving, put your life in the hands of Jesus Christ whom you trust and let your hair down, because it feels so good to not have to rely upon yourself for the ending. That first step out and the initial tumbling may scare the daylights out of you, but once you fully put that trust in Christ, the joy you feel lasts a lifetime.

Jesus Christ died to save you for this life, not just to get you to heaven. Cast off your burden. Allow Christ to erase your past, get rid of your anxiety for tomorrow, live for tomorrow and you will see how exciting and fun it is to be a follower of Christ.

Amen.