

April 28, 2020 Devotion "Batons"

Scripture We have 2 scriptures for today!

Acts 16:5

"So, the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers."

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Let us pray

Gracious and loving God, may the words spoken today be a message of hope and encouragement to all who hear it, and may it move us to a new understanding. Amen

This morning Buddy and I went for our usual 4:30 walk, and I climbed back into bed with the full intention of going back to sleep for a couple of hours. That didn't happen. I got a cup of hot Russian tea and sat trying to think of a devotion for today. That didn't happen. So, I checked emails and then went to Face Book. There were two You Tube videos I watched, and I read an article and they have become our devotion. You may wonder what in heavens name is Pastor Linda talking about! Bear with me, they do connect to each other.

The first video was of Jeannie Robertson. For those of you who don't know who she is, she is a motivational speaker, from the South, and I sat and cried I was laughing so hard! She told the story of a young girl, 16 or 18 years old, in a small-town beauty pageant. While a pretty girl, she had no talent, however she decided to twirl her sister's baton. But she didn't twirl it, she walked around acting like she was twirling it, to the music, The Hustle. Half-way through the 3 minute performance she prepared to throw it up in the air, and hopefully catch it. She threw it way up, stood there looking, waiting for it to come down so she could hopefully catch it, but it didn't appear, it was stuck in the stage drapery and it was not going to come down. The young girl had 3 options, get angry, fall apart, or Humor! She chose humor.

Video 2 was Rabbi Micah of Memphis Tennessee, who spoke about the 72nd anniversary of Israel's freedom. He talked about how the Jewish people celebrate one day by remembering all those who lost their lives, their names appearing continuously on TV as a reminder of each person who lost their lives. This day is one of grief and sorrow. The next day moves to a joyous celebration of their country's freedom. He related a story of a young man who was killed in 1948. He wrote about the goal of life, that life is short and that there are two conclusions he made: Enjoy life as much as possible and to dedicate life to something higher. Life by itself is worth little unless it serves something greater than itself.

The article was about Rev. Dr. E Stanley Ott, a PCUSA minister and president of Vital Churches. Vital Churches is a consulting firm that started the Acts 16:5 Initiative, I think in 2005. I attended a workshop he did in Tennessee; it was good. Somewhere in a box I have the material. An idea began to form in my mind about today's devotion. The article asked what have we learned about being disciples that we can pass along to others?

Why would a church's faith help a church grow in numbers daily? Because the Holy Spirit fills us with the knowledge we need to be disciples and perhaps because of the people in the church? It is important as we move through this staying at home time, shrouded in fear, that we make some choices. We can be like the young beauty pageant contestant who had three choices, get angry, fall apart or put some humor into our lives. Laughing this morning was therapeutic for me. We should look at what the young Israeli soldier wrote about life; life is short, we do not know how long our life will be, only God knows that. Life by itself is worth little unless it serves something greater than itself.

I hand off the baton to each of you today. As we run the race of life, it is up to us to choose, anger, falling apart or humor, and to serve or not to serve something greater, God. Rev. Ott spoke of discipleship, how we receive the teachings of the Bible, and how we must pass the baton on to others, especially the younger generations. When we choose humor, and serving God, others will accept the baton more readily than if we are angry or someone not in control of ourselves. The same is true of the church, but it starts with us. How are we living our life today?

If you would like to end your day with a good laugh, I encourage you to watch Jeannie Roberson's video on YouTube about twirling a baton. That is my gift to you this afternoon, as are the words in today's devotion.

Let us close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, you gave us the gifts of laughter and thinking. May we learn how to use them so that our faith grows daily, and we are encouraged to pass the baton to others, always in service to you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen