

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

January 29, 2023

Old Testament Reading; Micah 6: 1-8

Responsive Reading; Psalm 15

Epistle Reading; 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31

Gospel Reading; Matthew 5: 1-12

Sermon Title:

He who Glories, Let Him Glory in the Lord

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; God is God and we are NOT. Don't overthink it.

Today my sermon title is; "He Who Glories, Let Him Glory in the Lord", and my summary is; God is God and we are NOT. Don't overthink it.

We start out our scriptures in Micah where man has been trying to outsmart God. God calls them out on it by having a mock trial in which the mountains are the judge, and God is the defendant. God is trying to find out why mankind is accusing Him of mis-conduct. God recounts what He has done for them

and what He requires of them in return. God indicates that He is not interested in showy sacrifices of animals, or oil or especially not human sacrifices. God just wants His kids to be nice boys and girls. Be just, merciful and humble.

To the entrepreneurs and military leaders of the age this was ridiculous. To succeed you had to be crafty and aggressive.

Today things have not changed all that much.

Psalm 15 reiterates this concept asking, “Lord, who may abide in your tabernacle?” The answer is that we who were fortunate enough to have had good parents, heard from as early as we could remember. Be nice. Be honest. Don’t gossip or do bad things to the other kids. Don’t try to be like the bad guys but rather try to be like those kids that you would want for friends.

This is a pretty simple concept but sure was not the story line in popular TV shows like Dallas or Dynasty or even The Apprentice. People still think that being nasty is the way to get ahead in the world.

In our Corinthians reading Paul attempts to help us understand this God concept. Paul says, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written; I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For the Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,”

Paul then goes on to say that we should be humble and give credit where credit is due. If you have something to brag about it is not because you are super, but because your God is super. Paul ends with the title of this message, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”

At this point I want to digress and talk about the birds and the bees, well actually just about the birds. The birds that I specifically want to talk about are possibly the most majestic birds of the air. I am talking about the Eagle. There may be bigger birds but none as impressive as the Eagle. If there ever was a bird that should be able to brag it would be the Eagle. The Eagle is the king of the sky, the king of the plains and wooded areas and the king of every lake and river where it flies and fishes with precise skill and agility.

Back when I was a cross country trucker, I used to cross the Mississippi on Interstate 80 just inside the Iowa border. This is

where hundreds of Eagles migrated at a certain time of the year. Next to the bridge were several trees that reached up from river level to just above the height of the bridge. At this time there would be dozens of Eagles perched within fifty feet of the bridge right at eye level of the cabs of passing trucks. This was a magnificent sight especially when one would be returning to his perch with a large trout in its beak.

The thing that I did not see due to the time of the year, was baby eaglets in their nests waiting for mom and dad to bring them dinner. A baby eagle is totally dependent on its parents to survive. At first the baby eagle is totally helpless. Its feathers and wings are useless and it can not tear apart the food brought to it by mom and dad. The parents need to semi digest the food and hold in their throats so the eaglets can reach in and get the half-digested food. As the babies grow, they are able to tear apart pieces of meat or fish placed in the nest with them by their parents. Later on, under the watchful eye of their parents they learn to fly and eventually become the majestic birds we see by the bridge.

The point that I am trying to make is that these majestic rulers of the skies did not get to where they are now on their own merit. These masters of the sky got there by being obedient and honorable students of their wise and talented teachers, i.e. their parents.

I believe the point of this message is that if we want to be special in life we need to learn from the eaglets. Like the young eagles we need to learn from our father, our heavenly Father, and not to be so arrogant that we think we can outsmart God.

Getting to heaven is not hard. It is the easiest thing in the world. According to Romans 10: 9-13 it says, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame...for whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

This is not watering down the gospel. There are responsibilities that we have to follow. We cannot believe that because we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we can keep repeating the same sins over and over and think if we say we are sorry each time everything will be OK. We have a responsibility to try not to commit the same offense again. Oh, of course we will slip from time to time but God knows that He did not make us perfect. We will screw up but we need to try to honor our Father in Heaven by keeping our promises to Him as best as we can.

The Gospel speaks to every one of us. We are all "poor in spirit". We all mourn. We all should be meek, after all that even

our earthly parents told us that. We should all hunger and thirst after righteousness. We all should be merciful, because we all want that from others. We all need to be pure in heart because a sick heart makes us sick all over. We should all be peacemakers because as Dr. Martin Luther King said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness....and hate cannot drive out hate."

Oh yeah, when people revile you and persecute you, you are in good company and Jesus will definitely be holding your hand.

Eternity does not start when you die. Eternity started long before you were born, and eternity started for you when you were conceived. Don't wait for eternity. Reach out and grab it now. If you will turn your life and actions over to God He will take you in His arms and walk with you through every trial or misfortune that you will encounter and then one day you will find yourself face to face with Him and you will be able to give Him that grateful hug.

Hallelujah an Amen.