

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

October 10, 2021

Old Testament Reading; Amos 5: 6-7, 10-15

Responsive Reading; Psalm 90: 12-17

Epistle Reading; Hebrews 4: 12-16

Gospel Reading; Mark 10: 17-31

Sermon Title:

Establish the Work of Our Hands

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; The rich young ruler asked, “What shall I do?” When God answers our question, will we just walk away or, will we let God establish the work of our hands?

Seek the Lord and live, lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it.

Our Old Testament starts out pretty strong. Amos is saying that we live in an evil time and things just keep getting worse.

People are getting rich doing evil and they do not want to hear

any one calling them out for it. “They hate the one that rebukes in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks uprightly.”

Amos says that it is time to do something. For starters, “Seek good and not evil...Hate evil, love good; Establish justice in the gate.” If we start with an attitude for beatitude maybe God will pitch in and help us along.

If we were to wear our heart on our sleeve that would be a good thing. If the silent majority has become the silent minority then maybe it is time for us to speak up.

Our Psalm lesson picks up the same theme by telling us not to procrastinate. Especially as our birthdays seem to be advancing even quicker than we are. If not now, when? We can't ask God to act NOW while we sit on our thumbs. We see trouble all around us in attitudes, actions, events and in complacent responses. God cannot establish the work of our hands if we insist in continually jamming them deeper into our pockets. The Psalmist asks God to satisfy us early with His mercy so that we might rejoice and be glad in all our days. If we approach life with a positive attitude, we will be more likely be successful in our endeavors. Maybe we will even get the courage to take our hands out of our pockets. Any who! The psalmist also says that we should be transparent to others and especially to the next generation so they will have a good example to follow.

Oh good! A call to arms. Let's do it! Wait a second. Isn't that like asking a mouse to lead a revolt against a pack of feral cats?

In the children's hymn, Jesus Loves Me, it says, "little ones to Him belong. They are weak but He is strong." Hebrews says the same thing. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edge sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit." Hebrews goes on to say that God is all knowing and all seeing. No creature is hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. God can relate to us because He has been there and done that. Jesus is a High Priest that has faced all of the temptations that we face but never gave in to them.

Because Jesus knows where we are coming from, He can be there for us with compassion and understanding. We can go to Jesus with anything that is troubling us and He will not put us down or ridicule us for not having the answer. Jesus asks us to come to Him as little children, without fear or preconceived notions and with complete faith that what ever the problem, Jesus can make it better. Hebrews says that having this in mind, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

In Mark the rich young ruler came boldly before Jesus and asked a question without being ready to accept whatever answer Jesus might give him. If the rich young ruler had come

to Jesus as a child his answer would have been, “OK, if you say so.” Unfortunately, this man had a preconceived notion what would be unacceptable as an answer and Jesus saw right through him.

You need to remember that throughout the Old Testament it was common belief that God would immediately reward good deeds with instant wealth and if you saw a wealthy man you would naturally figure that he must be in good standing with God.

Jesus has a totally different concept of riches. The disciples were good Jews so they could not understand this new concept. The answer that Jesus gave Peter was in no way counter intuitive to the teachings of Christ. Remember Jesus had said, “In my father’s house are many mansions. I go to prepare “A” place for you.” He was only going to prepare one place and when Jesus said that anyone who gave up house or family or sisters or brothers or mothers or fathers would receive a hundred fold of houses, brothers , sisters, mothers, Jesus was saying the family of Christ would be made up of hundreds of family members with all family members having houses etc. and would not be confined to blood relatives. Well, at least this is how William MacDonald explains it in Believer’s Bible Commentary.

The problem was that the rich young ruler wanted to have his cake and eat it too. We have to keep our priorities straight and if we put Christ first, we will have riches beyond our wildest dreams but they won't be redeemable for cash.

A friend of mine showed me a card that she gets every year from her niece's church, wishing her well and it makes her whole week special.

The widow's mite was the greatest gift in the money box in the synagogue and an encouraging word might be the greatest gift your neighbor receives today, and it will come from you.

These things are the works of our hands that God will establish to make this a better world and all you have to do is believe in Jesus with the faith of a child and He will lead you to do small, but, great things for His world and ultimately for His Kingdom that He will share with us.

God answers prayer so maybe your prayer every day should be, "Jesus, please establish the works of my hands this day.

Hallelujah and Amen!

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