

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

October 2, 2022

Old Testament Reading; Habakkuk 1:1-4,2:1-4

Responsive Reading; Psalm 37: 1-9

Epistle Reading; 2 Timothy 1: 1-14

Gospel Reading; Luke 17: 5-10

Sermon Title: **Stir Up the Gift of God**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; A plug in air freshener will not do any good unless it is plugged in.

As I was struggling to figure out how to start a sermon based on so much relevant scripture. I mean these scriptures represented over twenty years of learning. Learning by listening to my parents my brother and my sister and countless others. As I pondered, I kept taking sips from my coffee cup that was inscribed with, "God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Finally, it grabbed me. The quiet word of God can drown out the noise of the world.

One of the most dramatic examples of this is found in 1 Kings 19: 11 through 13. Hear the word, “Then He [God] said, ‘Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord.’ And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle [coat] and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, “What are you doing here Elijah?”

What are you doing here Jim? Jim, you are here to stir up the gift of God!

In our Old Testament reading Habakkuk is stressed by all the evils going on in the world and then in chapter 2 he says he will wait on the rampart, i.e. alone and listen for what God has to say and what he is to do with the information. God tells him to tell the people to hold their horses because God will take care of things in His time and people could count on God to tell the truth and not lie. The proud [Nebuchadnezzar] would fall but the just would live by their faith in God.

When Habakkuk spent some quiet time with God, he got his answer. When the world is coming in around our shoulders, we need to spend some quiet time with God too.

Our Psalm tells us not to fret over what evildoers are doing or be envious of the gains made by the workers of iniquity. The Psalm tells us to, “Trust in the Lord and do good; Dwell in the Lord, and feed on His faithfulness, Delight in the Lord, Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, AND He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.”

God is good, all the time!

In our Epistle lesson Paul encourages Timothy by reminding him of his inheritance. The faith of his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice has planted the foundation of faith in Timothy. Therefore, Timothy is to “Stir up the gift of God” which was intensified by the actions and teaching of Paul. Paul goes on to tell Timothy that it is not going to be easy and how important that it is for Timothy to “Hold fast” to the teachings of Paul.

We, like Timothy, are to do that good thing which was committed to us, to keep, by the Holy Spirit that dwells within us.

This is our job, “to do what was committed to us, and to Keep by the Holy Spirit that dwells with in us”.

If you think that this is too much to ask of us mere mortal humans then you need to look at the Gospel.

Christ says, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you." We are not asked to do anything that easy. We are asked to block out the noise of the world and hear that still small voice of God telling us to "stir up the gift of God". That small gift that He has given each one of us, "To one of us the gift of teaching, to one of us the gift of preaching, to another the gift of listening, and to each of us the gift of loving others [even the ones we would rather not love].

I have always been bothered by people who retire and believe that they deserve more credit than they got. They say, "I never missed a day of work and I was always was on time!"

Big deal! That was what you were paid to do. Anything less would be a mark against you.

It seems that Jesus agrees with me. He says, "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep. Will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.

“So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’”

What we are asked to do may not be easy to do, but is easy to understand. We are to do the best we can to use those gifts given to us by God, because God has trusted us to do it.

An employer does not hire someone that he knows cannot do what is to be assigned, and God knows us, from before we were even born. God knows we can keep His commandments and He has bet His life on us. Don't let Jesus die for nothing, Stir up the gifts of God, let the still small voice drown out the noise of the world and you will do greater things than move some silly Mulberry tree.

Hallelujah and Amen