

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

October 29, 2023

Old Testament Reading; Deuteronomy 34: 1-12

Responsive Reading; Psalm 90: 12-17

Epistle Reading; 1 Thessalonians 2: 1-8

Gospel Reading; Mathew 22: 34-46

Sermon Title;

The Changing of the Guard

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; From followers to leaders and from students to professors.

Eagles are majestic birds. They rule the sky. If we think that they inspire awe and wonder to us just think how their offspring must feel. Those little chicks can't fly, they can't feed themselves and they depend solely on their parents for protection and education in how to do eagle things. Then one day the old eagles die and those little chicks have to take over as the majestic rulers of the sky. That must be scary. How do

you go from being an eagle-in-training to ruler of the sky just like that?

Now think how the children of Israel must have felt when Moses died. Moses led them in the wilderness for 40 years. For 40 years they did not have to worry about food or water or protection. Oh yes, Moses had help. The Lord knew Moses face to face. Even when they complained, Moses, with more than just a little bit of help from God, came through for them. What in the world would they do without him? Who would fill his shoes?

There had to be a changing of the guard. Just as in every country and every family there comes a time when there must be a changing of the guard.

There comes a time when followers have to become leaders and students have to become teachers. In the case of the church, the students have to become professing teachers, that is professors of Christ.

If this is going to happen there must be a plan in place. In the case of Moses, the plan was for Moses to teach Joshua every thing he could and to “lay hands on Joshua” thereby transferring not only his wisdom but character, and God’s Holy Spirit, to his protegee.

All of our scripture lessons today speak to this need for a plan of action. Our Psalm reading warns us not to put things off but start right now to gain the heart of wisdom, to learn God's ways of mercy and compassion and to rejoice in them. If we rejoice in God's love, we are more apt to want to spread the news both to our neighbors and our descendants. The last two verses tell us to teach our children of God's glory and let the beauty of our Lord God be upon us and the work of our hands.

In our Epistle, Paul entreats us to walk the walk and not to just talk the talk, even in the worst of circumstances. Paul points out that they were willing to profess the gospel even under spiteful circumstances. Paul also points out that while professing, they lead lives becoming an advocate of Jesus Christ. Paul and his associates did not jam Christ down anyone's throat. Paul says, "We were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children."

If we want our descendants and friends to accept Christ, we must present Him in the light of love. We have teachers who have inspired students to become teachers. As Christians we need to inspire the next generation to become new Christians. To accomplish this, we must earn the admiration of those we are trying to inspire. We need to be Holy just as God is Holy. In this case Holy means "set apart". Just as God is set apart to be God, we are set apart to reflect God. We are set apart to do

this. Whether or not we do it is a different matter. We are set apart to do the best job we can.

Many of us are grandparents and enjoy a certain advantage over the parent as often seen as the one restricting the child with rules and so forth. As grandparents we are the loving story tellers. Children want to hear stories. Stories of how God helped us and how God got us through tough stuff will resonate in their impressionable minds. We can help children see God as the super hero that He really is.

In our gospel lesson Jesus shows us how to dumb it down so anyone, even a child, can understand the will of God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”. Heart, emotional nature. Soul, spiritual nature. Mind, intellectual nature, and in the book of Mark “strength” is used indicating physical nature.

Heart, Mind, Soul and strength are the total spectrum of love and particularly Love of God.

Now add to that; the way to love God is how we should love our neighbor, i.e. everyone else in the world, and you got it all covered. If you love; you can't murder, can't defraud, can't steal, can't hurt and can't covet. This is true because of what love is.

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

The changing of the guard is upon every family and every nation. Either we are learning leaders and professors or we are students and/or followers about to assume our new role in God's world. As new leaders and professors of God's love we can be a changing force. If all the people reflect God's light, all the leaders will have to join the party.

Let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works and glorify our God who is in heaven!

Hallelujah and Amen.