

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

April 30, 2017 3rd Sunday of Easter

1st Reading Acts 2: 14, 36-41

Responsive Reading; Psalm 116: 1-4, 12-19

Epistle Reading; 1st Peter 1: 17-23

Gospel Reading; Luke 24: 13-35

Sermon Title: STAND NOT UPON THE ORDER OF THY LEAVING,
BUT LEAVE AT ONCE

Summary: Sometimes planning is good and sometimes any
planning is over planning.

Back in the dark ages the TV was a small thing, a 19 inch screen
was huge. It only received 3 stations that had to be changed at
the set manually as you adjusted the rabbit ears for a better
black and white picture. The programming went off at midnight
with a test pattern that remained until 6am.

The program selection was very limited but strangely seemingly
less limited than it is now.

On one particular evening my parents and I were watching a
movie version of the Shakespeare play Macbeth.

At one point the guilt ridden King Macbeth was having
hallucinations at his own palace party. His wife Lady Macbeth

did not want the guests to see him acting crazy so she told them all to leave quickly by saying, "Stand not upon the order of your leaving but leave at once."

I asked my mother what that all meant and she said that protocol for leaving a royal event was leave in the order of your importance and each guest was expected to shake the hosts hand and praise them a little on the way out.

The situation did not allow for that kind of time consuming exit.

When I read these scriptures in preparation for this message the urgency of each of the lessons screamed at me like the words of Lady Macbeth.

In Acts on the day of Pentecost Peter impresses his listeners so much they say, "Brothers, what should we do?"

When he tells them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ they do not go home to discuss it with their family and friends, they do it, "and 3000 were added to their number that day."

In the Psalm the writer says, "Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live...I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord...I will pay my vows to the Lord...I will offer you a thanksgiving sacrifice...I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the

courts of the house of the Lord. In your midst, O Jerusalem.
Praise the Lord.”

Not later or maybe but I will do these things NOW!

In the Epistle Peter says, “Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your hope and faith are set on God. Now that you have purified your souls...love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew...through the living and enduring word of God.”

Love each other NOW, not when you are feeling it. NOW!

Then finally on the road to Emmaus, protocol says, protocol heck, the fear of dying at the hands of bloodthirsty bandits says, “Stay with us for it is nearly dark.”

“When he was at table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight...that same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.”

That same hour, not at the crack of dawn, at that same hour, “Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and robbers and bandits, I will fear no evil, or beating or loss of life, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy shield protect me and I do not need an armed escort. I’m gone!”

The urgency screams, "Stand not upon the order of thy leaving but leave at once!"

Those two fearful disciples lost their fear and went.

Sometimes doing God's will takes planning. If you are going on a mission trip to a ghetto in Chicago, Detroit or Albany it is going to take a lot a planning. Transportation, housing, contacts, equipment, food, and objectives to show God's love are all going to have to be planned in advance. Guess what, at our age we are not likely to go on a mission trip to any ghetto.

Does that mean that God is not going to give us an opportunity to witness for him? Not on your life. Most outreach is spontaneous.

This past week I was at UMMC waiting to get that wonderful butt scope procedure. I was in the room where family members of surgery patients waited for news of the surgeries. A young attractive student nurse appeared in the doorway explaining to someone she needed to do something. She then announced to the family members in a bowldish quivering voice, "I know you are waiting and worrying but I just need to tell you that you do not have to worry because Jesus has got this. Your loved ones will be fine."

This was not planned. God told her to act and she did. The only comments were positive like, "Wow, you don't see that much anymore."

Later this week I was at Verizon trying to pay a bill when a 30s something lady approached me with a question about how God could wait so long to help a girl held captive in a basement for 24 years. I answered her the best I could but I doubted that I had a very good answer. To my surprise she was comforted and said that she was sure that God had made our meeting happen.

I can assure you that this message took a lot more planning than that impromptu answer and I can only hope that this message is half as effective.

Yesterday Wanda received a get well card from Hazel with a hand written note. Hazel is blind and her cursive is better than mine. That note did more for Wanda than all the medicine she has received in a week.

The point is, "Stand not on the order of sharing God's love but love at once!"

This is what we can all do for God and this is what we can so easily miss out on doing. You have no idea how many times I have seen someone in distress and been so wrapped up in my own thoughts that I passed by on the other side of the road and

then later when it was too late thought, "Gee I should have said something or asked how they were."

In most cases in our walk with God planning is not an option. God gives us now and in this life that is all we can count on so if you are loved, and you are, pay it forward.

Because God first loved us, "Stand not upon the order of your sharing God's love but share it now!"

Hallelujah and amen.