

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

June 3, 2018

Old Testament Reading; 1st Samuel 3:1-10

Responsive Reading; Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18

Epistle Reading; 2nd Corinthians 4: 5-12

Gospel Reading; Mark 2:23-3:6

Sermon Title: STRETCH OUT YOUR HAND

Summary: Hear your name. Step Forward. Stretch out your hand. Then and only then you will be healed.

Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, "Step forward."

Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand", and he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.

When I was a young boy we did not have a TV and our only radio was a floor model that stood taller than I stood. We did not have a TV but we did have entertainment.

Every night when Dad finished milking the cows he would get out the Bible and read us a story from it. Then he would dumb it down so a 6 year old and his 12 year old sister could understand and enjoy the story.

One of the stories was the Old Testament lesson about the Lord speaking to Samuel, a boy about my age. Dad made it so real that I experienced the call a night or two later. I was awakened by a voice saying, "Jim! Jimmy!" Jimmy is what you call a little boy named James.

I obediently answered, "Speak Lord for your servant listens." I then stayed awake all night long waiting for God to tell me whatever he was going to say. Nothing. I guess I waited about ten years before I heard any instructions and I cannot remember what those instructions were but I did feel that God did speak to me from time to time. I guess that makes me mentally ill according to the far left.

When Vice President Pence said that he received heavenly guidance someone responded, "When someone speaks to Jesus it is called Christianity but when someone says that they heard Jesus speak to them it is called mental illness."

I resemble that remark.

I am very receptive to this concept that God does speak to ordinary people. I believe that this is different for different people. Some hear a voice; some feel a presence, some have a dream and others feel the message as they study the Bible. I do not think anyone of these is better than another but I believe that all can profit from the experience of feeling Gods presence in their lives.

All four of our scripture readings deal with direct interaction between God and man.

In the Old Testament reading it is God talking to Samuel. In the responsive reading it is the Psalmist relating how he was “wonderfully” made in the womb and how God had a plan for him from the beginning of time. The Epistle lesson tells how God has put his light into our hearts through the life and death and resurrection of Christ and how God has committed himself to being with us always no matter what the situation.

“We are hard pressed on every side yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.” God is there, with us in all circumstances.

Finally in the Gospel Jesus tells us that the Sabbath was created for man not man being created for the Sabbath. Then Jesus tells us what we need to do to further facilitate his interaction with us.

First we need to listen for his call.

Second we need to disregard what others may think and step forward.

Third we have to have enough faith to believe that Jesus is there for us and will do for us what is best.

In Psalm 81: 6-10 God tells of some that he has done and more of what we can expect if we will but stretch out our hand to him.

“I removed his shoulder from the burden; His hands were freed from the baskets. You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. ‘Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you! O Israeli you will listen to Me! There shall be no foreign god among you; Nor shall you worship any foreign god. I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

Stretch out your withered hand and I will heal it. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it. Return your nation to me and I will heal that also.

Now come to the table and eat and drink and talk and the Lord your God will be with you now and tomorrow and even unto the end of the age.

Hallelujah and amen!