

Calvary United Methodist Church  
October 21, 2018

**THE YOUR MISSION**  
Rev. R. Jeffrey Fisher

**Children's Message:**

Romans 12:10-12

I invite our children forth for our children's message. Come on up. You are welcome! I am going to have you come clear on up today so we are a little bit away from the bells. So nice to have you all here today on a beautiful fall morning. It's been nice to see the sky and the sun this week a little bit, right? Great! Right there we have eight years of birthday all in one day. Happy birthday!

Today I want to chat a little bit about what it is to be happy. Are you all happy? When you see a smile like that, what do you think? Do you think he's upset? (No.) No! You see, when we have the love of God in our hearts, someday we have bad days, stuff goes wrong: something at school, something at home, something that we're planning on that goes wrong. And we might get sad for moments, but overall we have a joy of God in our heart because I know that all I do is to serve God and God is with me wherever I am and I hope we all know that, wherever we are, even in the worst of our times when things go really bad, I have to sometimes smile in my heart and say, "Oh, God, make today a better day." And we do that as long as we learn to serve and to love one another.

This Word of God today says: Love each other like brothers and sisters. Give your brothers and sister more honor than you want for yourselves. Do not be lazy but work hard. Here's the important thing: Serve the Lord with all your heart. Be joyful because you have new hope. Be patient when trouble comes. Pray all the time.

So, today's message is that there is something you can do to help other people. Do you believe that? You and I have something we can do for God even at your age and even when we turn 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80 and 90 and 100, no matter what our age is, God has something that we can do for God and it ought to be for fun.

Now, we are in this church and there is an awful lot that you can do around here, but working for God just isn't in this place. You can do it at home. Some people do it by coaching baseball or helping with Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, some people do dance, some people work in community gardens, some people visit in nursing homes. You see, working for God isn't in a place, it's wherever we are with whoever we are.

But here in this place I want to let you know there are things you can do here too that are important. Sometimes we have to set up for a lot of stuff and some of this stuff might be a little too big for you right now, but we have to set up and tear down and clean up. How many of you clean up your room once in a while? So you know how to clean up. So when we have ban-

quets and parties and celebrations, you can help us clean up.

Sometimes at church we like to make it really pretty and this summer, do you see all the flowers? I took this a couple of weeks ago before they took them out. Now, these aren't our gardeners, these are just people like those who like to go around gardening and making things beautiful like the flowers. How many of you like to have a garden in the summer? So come next summer you can come and help weed and water the flowers and do things like that.

And this isn't just for young people. A part of finding our mission, our calling is what is it that God wants all of us in this room to do to make a difference? Sometimes, actually almost all week long, our phone rings off the hook. You know what that's like at home? You try to get work done and someone calls. So, we are so thankful for volunteers who come and answer the phone.

Now, the next photo, I want to let you know, is no one from our church. We would not probably want this person answering our phone. Would you want that person answering your phone? Why? Why wouldn't you want her answering your phone? (Because it might be a stranger.) And she doesn't look too friendly, does she? (No!) Because here at Calvary we smile, we are friendly, we are loving, we are hospitable because... Would you want this person? (No!) No, we can't be lazy either.

This is the one we want. She's not from our church either, but I'd hire her because she's wearing a smile. You see, when we work for God, even when we don't feel it sometimes, we put on a happy face because we want to serve God. We want to be happy because when you are around other people who are happy do you feel better? Even when I am having a bad day, if I get around other people who are happy, I feel better, because it is contagious. Yeah, it makes you feel better just when you see those smiles, you can't be sad.

God wants us to serve and there are so many places beyond these walls. Like, how many of you like to do crafts? (Me!) Me too! And I don't even have to be that good at it. I can just do them. And sometimes we can visit hospitals or nursing facilities or senior centers and it makes other people happy when we share our talents. So, sometimes when you are having fun you can make something and give it to someone else.

It is getting to be the season of the year where we start baking. How many of you like to bake? (Me!) You know what I like to do? Eat cookies! (Me, too!) Anybody out there like to eat cookies? And when we bake, there is a lot of times we have fun doing it and we can do it with friends and we can do it and share with other people.

Here at Calvary there are so many ways for you...you...to share your gifts. For instance, we have young people that come and help carry food for our food pantry, Calvary Cupboard. Sometimes beyond the church we have young people who raise money for those who have all kinds of health problems and for cancer and things, because they like to run, they like to walk

and they like to do things.

You can be a great winner for God by being a friend at school. There is always someone who needs more friends and they are having a bad day and they need someone to smile and be their friend. That's not hard, is it? To just be a nice person and be friendly.

So, part of what we do here is learn about God and learning about God is sometimes like a little work because you have to read and if you can't read all on your own, maybe Mom or Dad or grandparents or a friend could help you read. We read to learn more about God. We pray so we can talk with God. We come to church so we can worship God.

And even in this worship service there are things that you can do. We use men and women and young boys and girls to light our candles. This reminds us of God's presence. Every time we light a candle, it reminds us that God is with us. If you have never been an acolyte we would be glad to have you learn to be an acolyte.

Did any of you see the children's choir from Africa a couple of weeks ago when they were here? Some of you saw them, right? They like to sing and many people like to hear music. For instance today we had the beautiful bells. We need boys and girls like you to sing with Ms. Debbie in our children's choirs. It's fun. I started singing when I was wee little and I still love to do it because it makes me feel good and happy, but it is praise to Almighty God. And you can even join the bell choir and learn to do it so when you become an adult you can still play them. (Child speaks.) You have a drum set? Maybe you could play your drums sometime. See, we share those gifts because people get happy and God is very happy because God gave you those gifts and it's important that we smile and that we share our happiness and our service with others.

I want to remind you: love each other like brothers and sisters. Give your brothers and sisters more honor than you want for yourself. Do not be lazy, but work hard. Serve the Lord with all your heart. Be joyful because you have hope. Be patient when trouble comes. And pray at all times.

You are a blessing to your parents and everybody who knows you and to Pastor Bob and me. We are glad you are here and we are glad you'll find your place to use your gifts.

On your way out you may get a snack for the road and I thank you for coming up here today. God bless your week.

**Message:**

Acts 16:11-15 and Luke 16:10-15

Today in my message I'm talking about us finding our mission, our purpose. For some it is within the life of the church; for some it's in the walls of the community or beyond the walls actually. For some it is in our family. But I begin by telling a story about Lydia, a woman of purple. Purple, the color purple and the cloth, is a very expensive cloth and Lydia, who is rec-

orded here in the Bible was a very rare individual in those days because it was a man's world. Thankfully it has changed somewhat now days, but women were often not seen as much in leadership in those days. She had a business near water in the city she lived in Thyatira. She had that business and I'm sure she was doing very well. The cloth was used in many religious circles and so she had a constant market for it. And she was in that market with a lot of other business people.

The story goes, as you heard the scripture read this morning, that she would go to market and she heard people talking about the Word of God. Pastor Bob talked about this last week with Paul's journey when he got out of prison he and Silas went up into Europe and so it was the first time the Word of God, as we know it through the Gospel, arrived and she heard it and it said her heart was what? Opened to receive. Her heart was opened.

So the question for us today is...are our hearts open to have what God would have for you and me and it will be different for every one of us, what God want us to do. She learned to become obedient to God. She went home. She told her family. She told her friends. She told her coworkers. She told the people that were working in the other trades that they too could be part of this. What it is to fall in love with God, to find your place in the kingdom. Have you fallen in love lately? With God. To say, "God, what is it at this point in my life that I can be doing for you and your kingdom?" The plots and the places that she worked had been going for centuries. It didn't take this photo, but visited it in Morocco a couple of years ago, the dye pits where people have been using these same clay pits for over 1500 years. And I can only imagine Lydia going to dye pits and speaking with the men and women who worked there and saying, "Let me tell you about my God. Let me tell you how Jesus has changed my heart. I've given my life to him, and you ought to consider doing the same." Because it was a privilege to share the love of God and what God can do.

Do you remember what God can do for you? Some of you were baptized as infants, you probably don't remember that but you might remember your confirmation, what it was like to have a hunger for God. When I was a young boy and I was baptized as a young man, not as an infant, I hungered to know more of God. My youth leader, who was a wonderful youth leader like we have here, taught us to love God and to get into music and to share our gifts and to help the homeless and to raise money for the poor and to visit the elderly. I couldn't get enough because it's what everyone said so far this morning and what you'll see later in the message, I feel better about me. I feel better about me when I help other people. God wants us to find that joy and when my life turns inside and I only think of me, and I have my moments. I go to an antique store and I want more for me, right? I go to a tool shop, I love Lowes, I am a guy, I like tools. And so I want more tools. There is plenty of me, the selfish me. But when I step away from the selfish me, I find life. And I find it abundantly.

She said she consecrated her life. She said to Paul and the others, "I want this baptism. I want to be made whole. I want to cleaned up for God that I can be a worthy vessel," and she did. She was baptized and it was like new life. She could tell everybody what it was like.

I love this every week when I remember my baptism, when you see water. There are times literally I think of baptism, being washed up. I don't know about you, but there are days I get really sad about Jeff. Do you do that about yourself? And say, "Why did I just say that that I said? Why did I do what I did this week? Why didn't I do what I promised that I would do?" Do you know what I mean? It's called sin. And then I look at an infant being baptized or an adult and I'm thinking, "Oh, God, you love me anyway. You love me anyway." That's what it means to be cleaned up by Almighty God. And you know what happens when you do that? You see that smile on Lydia? That's what happens when you know God loves you. You come to life. And it's said she was filled with the gift of what we want so badly in life: hospitality. She welcomes...even if people talked about her she took in these prisoners named Paul and Silas and others and coworkers. It didn't matter, because you are welcome in my house.

We have so many excuses: our houses aren't big enough, they are not clean enough, they aren't fixed up enough and it didn't matter. I grew up in a home where to this day in my 60 years of life if you go on a weekend there are 15 to 20 people at our house every Friday, every Saturday and every Sunday and my poor mom is still baking and cooking. And I miss that. Why? Because my mother has that gift of hospitality. It is a gift that we the people of God are supposed to have, that we can help transform other lives.

Now, I'm going to show you a few photos of people that aren't like us. You saw this one earlier. If you saw that when you walked into church, what do you think? Oh, Lord, I am turning around and going right out that door. I'm trusting this woman posed for that.

First impressions are almost everything. We all have bad days. There are days I feel worse than that, but I make a choice to be nice because you don't want to see the other side, right? We have a choice. Where something is going wrong in a restaurant, something gone wrong at work, something going wrong: we have a choice to make to be a godly person, to make someone's day when we don't know what they have gone through. We have a choice because we don't want to squander and waste the time we have. It is a gift from God. We don't know when our last day will be. The gift you have is to talk to your children and your parents and your friends and your neighbors, to be liked, to be loved, to be hospitable, to make this Kingdom of God come on earth today. That's our gift from God. He's given us life that we might offer it to other people.

It's said that Lydia had fervor. Do you need a little fervor? You need excitement? You need joy, you need love, you need...I'm going to go out and I'm going to transform this word for God. I want to feel like this when I go out in the morning. We ought to all pin that up. Whoever that child is I want to tell you, that was a good day, right? I want this because I've seen this other part. I've seen this.

I've been plenty of places around Pennsylvania and around the world where there are pits of water and you're dying of thirst and you think: there ain't no way I'm getting water out of

there to drink, right? And then I go to the mountains and I can get right down on my knees on the rocky bed and slurp up some good mountain water because it is fresh. You see, when God told us that we could come to the well that would never run dry, it would be a well filled with fresh water, new life. That's what it is like daily to get washed away of my sins, to start a new day and say, "Lord, let me live for you."

When I was a young boy in Vacation Bible School we sang a song called, it wasn't fill my cup, running over, running over, my cup is full and running over, right? Is your cup full? There are going to be days when it is not, but you can choose to fill your cup with the love of God.

When we come into this church, can you have a passion? And can you not put it on our music and on your pastors? A passion for worship comes in your heart. No matter what we say or do up front here, and we're a part of that, it comes from your preparedness, coming in here, coming in here excited to hear the Word of God, something that is read, one of the prayers, something in the hymns, being able to realize you are in a position to give anything to God as a gift versus having to be in the tranches where you have nothing to give. Worship is about our passion for God, our life.

In 1952, people were gathering in this community and right where this church is sitting, it's hard to imagine, 1952 it was the Ricker farm. And the people thought we need a local congregation here where we can worship and they had a vision and they worked hard together and they met in the basement of the Seventh Day Adventist and they met in homes and they pulled their funds together and I'm sure they gave sacrificially that they might have what is called today Calvary United Methodist Church. And they worked and they had a vision why? Because the pastor, Rev. Hopkins at that time, led the people to what it was to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They wanted a faith. They wanted to be known for their faith not by what their lack of faith was.

I want to ask today: are you ready to be known by your faith and people will say to them: I remember them when I was a little boy or girl or they were my neighbor, they were faithful people, they were people who demonstrated it. Because a worldly church is no good, if we are only concerned about our lives.

And I confessed, remember, I get that way from day to day. It's all about me. But at what point are we going to realize and break down and say, "Lord, It's about you and your kingdom." And this church needs to be a faithful people. We need to have a new vision again and again and again with God's authority to go into the world. This isn't a place for us to come to meet because we like to get together with each other. This is a place to fill our tank to go out into our workplace, to go into our children's homes and our parents and neighbors and to say, "I want to talk to you about the man who saved my life, Jesus Christ, the one who has given me life and everything that I have." It's a vision, it's an unshakable faith. It's reminding others that in the good mountaintops and in the valleys, God is with us.

And years later, back around 2005 another vision was planted and more people of this same church started breaking ground and people came together, some are still here. They had a new vision to increase the work of this congregation in the community, to be known for our faith. This community is changing and it still needs Jesus Christ. I asked a few people around here and these people aren't any more special than you all. God looks at you and says, "You are all wonderful children." But these happen to be near me this week and I was able to get a hold of them. And for that I am grateful.

Jackie Whiting comes in here once in a while, quite often, and serves at the desk, which a lot of you could do. I said, "Jackie, why do you come in here and answer these phones?" She says, "Because I am thankful for all that God has done for me." That's a good response.

I asked John Ewell, who has been here for a long time. He serves a lot even in the church but beyond that with Boy Scouts in particular: I'm a member at Calvary because Calvary had a scout troop in 1964 when he and Barbara moved to Harrisburg and were looking for a new church home. He's been in scouting since he was 12 and benefitted from those leaders who took time and patience, I can't imagine it, to instill values in him. I have felt it my responsibility in mission to instill those values that our youth and adult leaders in some capacity for, catch this, 60 years.

What are you committed to?

Horace Flynn was here at the first service. Do you know Horace? Last Saturday was Horace's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. I want to look that good at 90. I don't think I look that good now. Horace was taken at age 8 to Milton Hershey School. He didn't have his parents. Now that was a while ago. Even I don't remember it, 1938. And the girls and the men who lead Hershey schools now, they get the new classes every fall, about 150 kids. You could imagine, now many of them still have parents but they are underprivileged and they come to school, how frightening it is when you are 8 or 10 years old to go to a place where you know nobody. So, Horace goes over to tell them it's going to be okay. Does it choke you up a little bit? It should. That's a pretty marvelous thing to do when you are 90 years old, to tell kids, "Hey, buddy, it's going to be fine. You are going to be just fine."

Kelley Price and Teri Mathias, Kelley is our church office manager, secretary: We serve in our church camps because everything that happens during the week makes us more aware of God and His presence. Every year we go to camp and plan and God throws it up in the air and changes things and guess what? His ways are much better. Plus it gives us a chance to be a little wacky. I work with her all the time. And we praise God for that

Milis Schwartz isn't the longest term counting money on Monday mornings. I said, "Milis, why do you do that?" He said, "I serve because I want to give back to God and this church."

You see something common in these faces? Every single one of them has a smile.

Brendon Paul works in the community with the ball teams: I love the game and really enjoy seeing the kids increase their abilities, watching them grow, become exciting is wonderful. I feel...hear these words...I make a difference.

Paul and Silas made a difference in Lydia who made a difference throughout Europe and we're here because someone wanted to make a difference.

Pat Shomper comes in here some mornings like 4:30 or 5 because she doesn't sleep well and likes to work. We call her Lil Pat. "I serve because I love to do it. I love it for the people of my Calvary family and for God."

You see, they are all different gifts. Nancy, who works in our finance office here and Braden Benedict went to Maine this year to work, another impoverished pocket of our country: I like to work because I work with my hands and it makes me feel happy to help others.

It's a great thing to be able to help others.

Brian Price serves in soccer: I serve because I love soccer and somebody gave me their time when I was young to referee the game so now I'm giving back.

Giving back.

Jill Robertson: why I serve? Because Healthy Kids Running Series. Jill works with about 200 kids a couple of times a year. Why Healthy Kids Running Series? I've always been active, fit, athletic and health conscious. As an adult I got into running in triathlons. When I had kids I wanted them to value their health too and take care of their body they were given. I found this opportunity to do what I love, a great thing, model. It's a great thing to model for young people. For my kids, how to be a leader, how to give back to the community. We have over 200 kids each spring and fall from ages 2 to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The program involves kids self-esteem through goal setting, personal improvement. The pride kids feel when they cross the finish line is undeniable. When kids push themselves to finish the race, not walk, improve their time or get back up having a fall, they are proud of themselves and it shows. This race series provides every single kid a change to define their own success. It's very encouraging environment where parents are not only cheering for their own kid but also for the kids in the back of the pack, willing them to keep going to the finish line.

And this your man, me like 30 years ago when I started going to Africa, this is my 41<sup>st</sup> year. And my family and friends used to say, "Why do you go there? There is enough needs right here." And my common line to those and some of the churches through the years is: And what are you doing for them? What are you doing for the needs here? You see, we are all called, not one better than the other, we are all called to different places. We are called to serve in joy. We are called to a mission field as soon as you walk out these doors. It could be your home, it

could be your neighbors, it could be your school, it could be in sports, it can be in dance. What are you called to? What are you doing? And no retirement in the kingdom of God. Even at 90 or 100 there is something you can do to pray and write and encourage and be present for other people.

You see, the mission field is big, but what it is, what is it that you are called to? For some that mission for years is caring for an elderly parent or a spouse. For some it might be a call to visit those who are in prison that are often forgotten. For some it is the local people who are so dedicated to our care in times of emergencies. For some it's taking care of a friend who no longer even remembers your name.

I think of a cross where someone love me so much he said: I will give it all. And I think of a resurrection that said: Jeff, no matter how bad things get, no matter how tough times are, there is another day dawning. It's called resurrection and what are you going to do with that day? It's a gift from God, tomorrow and today. Being raised from the dead is never boring, therefore every Christian has a stunning testimony.

What is your testimony of life? What will people say about you? What is it about you that can bring joy and laughter and share your gifts? Sometimes we in a church want to play it safe. What I've come to learn so far about my faith is Jesus never asks anyone to play it safe. We were born to be brave.

I've been in a lot of crazy places, some of them dangerous, some I wouldn't do again. But you know when we ask you to come up here and lay read, step out and have a little faith. Could we ask you to be an acolyte? To be an usher? Could you find something in your community for the children, for the young, for the elderly, for the special needs? I don't know your calling, I'm just saying find it. Find what it is. Add to the world's greatest mission field. Time is short. Jesus said that the fields are white onto harvest. I don't know what it is God has for you. I just know with my whole heart God has something for you that maybe no one else will do.

These are some things I've learned along life's journey: people may forget what we've said and tried to help them. They will never forget how you made them feel. When you love, when you care, when you give of yourself, you will touch somebody's life. The people who had this vision at Calvary in this community, cared about you and some of them never met you. Praise God for people like that. They believed these words of God that said: All things are possible with God. I don't think there is anything in this world we can't do with the power of God behind us. We could turn the stagnation into running water into new life and we can do it with joy because I want to be known and I want you to be known for your faith. We need to be known for our faith.

Let us pray: Almighty and Everlasting God, thank you for trusting us with the work of your kingdom. Help us find our place exactly what you would have us do. Enable us to step out, to be brave with our service, with our finances, with our gifts of time and talents. Helps us trust you. We ask this in Thy Son's Holy Name. Amen.