

Calvary United Methodist Church  
November 17, 2019

**A GREAT REVELATION**  
Rev. R. Jeffrey Fisher

**Children's Message:**

Isaiah 65:17

We invite our children to come forward for the children's message. Children come forward, please. Good morning. I look forward to seeing your smiles each week because it makes me feel happy to see you. And you as well.

This morning's message is a little bit about how we choose to be happy by sometimes forgetting the things in the past and sometimes looking forward. The lesson is very important for us today. I invite you to hear this lesson. It is from the Prophet Isaiah:

Look, I will make new heavens and a new earth. And people will not remember the past. They will not think about those things.

How many of you ever think of things that you would like to get out of your mind? Do you ever have that yet? I don't know...any of you do that? Like, I think of the things that I forgot to do yesterday. You are too young to forget...do you ever forget to do things? Does anyone out there ever forget to do things? Pretty much become habitual from time to time as we get older.

I sometimes remember things that I didn't do well, especially when I was your age. I would remember when a teacher would have a surprise test and I didn't study my spelling, English or math or something. And I'd think: why didn't I remember to do that? And then I would feel bad about it. Did you ever do that? Sometimes. And sometimes in the middle of the day, one of those thoughts come into my mind about something I said and shouldn't have said, something I did that I shouldn't have done or something that I should have said and didn't. God says: Let's get rid of that trash. We can learn from our mistakes, but don't let yourself be bothered by the things...you can't change what was yesterday, can you? But you can make sure you study for the test the next time that you are prepared and you try to find ways to remember the things you need to do. Those of us that are older tend to write them down, as long as we don't forget where we wrote them we are okay.

But it is good to remember the things we ought to do because then we stay in a happy place. It's really nice to be in a happy place. Are you in a happy place right now? Let's hear an Amen. (Amen.) It's a good place to be, in God's house, right? It's a happy place.

And I wanted to ask you what kind of things made you happy? When I was younger we didn't have anything quite this fancy, but I loved to run and play. I still do, actually, but just with different toys.

When I was younger we made treehouses...none that looked like this, right? They were made from old scraps of wood and metal and whatever, but some other times we find water parks...all kinds of things make up happy. Friends make us happy.

What makes you happy? What are some things that make you happy? (Child speaks.) Spending time with your family. Did you say board games? That's fun. Baking. Let me know about that. There are all kinds of things that make us happy and when we do that, and even when we don't, we can choose...do you know you can choose to be happy? Did you ever have a day when you get up and you feel like this, because someone said you have to go to school today and you don't want to go to school today; someone said you have to go to the doctor and you don't want to go to the doctor; someone said you have to give money for something...we have all kinds of reasons that make us feel like that.

And in the midst of that God says that you have to choose, and you can choose happy, because there are a lot of things that children and adults alike we have to do and no one wants it. Like when it is your turn to do this, clean your toilet. Oh, I can't wait! Right? No one wants to do that, right? But, we can choose to say: you know what? How about sometime this winter we'll probably get snow and you might be out...and the first couple times it is really fun, you can make snowmen and have snowball battles, build snow forts and then about February we are kind of tired of it, right? And someone still needs to shovel. And you can say: I don't want to. But you can choose to say: okay, I'm a part of the family, I'll do it.

Or sometimes...how many of you have pets? Some of you. It's nice to pet them and stuff. It's not so nice to clean up after them, is it? No, but someone has to do that. And you can choose happy.

Can you not feel happy when you see that? So, when you go to school, when you get up in the morning, when you see friends and others, you know why? If you smile like, guess what? Everybody around you is going to feel better. When I see you smiling, when I see you just coming up here, I feel happy because I'm so glad to see you. It's a wonderful thing.

Some of you know this person. Do you know who that is? (Child speaks.) Winnie the who? (Child speaks.) That's right. And what's Winnie's friend's name? Eeyore is not always happy, is he? You know what Eeyore needs to do? He needs to choose happy because there are a lot of reason with the responsibilities we have, taking care of homework and school and bills and all the things from children to adult.

There are many things we are not happy but we can choose because when I wear my smile and you wear your smile and we help around the house and when we choose to be happy, when we encourage others, when someone says: your dress looks nice today or you look so great or thank you for what you've done and I'm so happy about your work that you have done, your dancing, your playing your sport, doesn't it feel good?

So, Church: are we going to encourage one another? I need a little more on that one. (Yes!) We are going to because it makes a difference. When we tell other people lovely things so we don't complain...it's okay if there's a problem, say: could we correct this? But we aren't mean and we are not nasty and we are not negative. We choose happy. We choose. It says:

Look, I will make things new on earth and people will not remember the past. They will not think about those things.

We can't complain about the past because we can't change that. We can change the future by making sure that we stay happy and I'm happiest because when I am here I am reminded that Jesus loves me and no matter how many mistakes I've made, no matter how many mistakes any of us make, God says: I still love you and I want you to always know that from this day forward, if you didn't know before, God always loves you no matter how many mistakes we might have made, God says: I love you.

I thank you for coming up this morning and making me happy. There are fruit snacks here for you all as you go home today. Have a blessed week.

**Message:**

Luke 21:5-19

There have been people throughout the ages predicting the ends. We have known in my lifetime at least Hale-Bopp Comet and a couple other groups like that that said this is the end and they took their lives and Jesus said: Even the King himself will not know the end of the times.

The good news is we claim Christ as our own. The good news is Christ says He's already claimed us as His own and that we are heirs of His Kingdom. We are His children. He's our Papa, our Heavenly Father and He will save us from all these other things when we have belonged to him.

We do not live in fear. There are certain earthly things we might be afraid of and some of that takes a little bit of wisdom, you know where you don't go in the middle of the night and where there are danger zones around your area or around the world. War zones. But overall, we need to be a people who trust. I would much rather wake in the morning with praise than wake in the morning and tremble and I praise because I know who is in charge of life. And I know from the day I've made my commitment to God that my life is truly in God's hands. Whether my health is faltering, whether my days and years are numbered, I know I am with God. And God says He will care for me all the days of my life.

I grew up in a day when people talked a lot more about heaven than we do now. And quite frankly, those heavenly images weren't things that I longed for. I'm not kind of pearly gate kind of guy. I'm not a kind of guy that wants to see a pearl in the east and west and north and south and a door big enough for me to walk through. I am more of a log cabin by a brook,

you know, that works for me. But what I do know is the Kingdom of God isn't necessarily a place. It's a realm by which there is finally peace and God's Kingdom will reign here upon earth and heaven is on earth. We will be the end of warring.

You know, war is one thing when it is out there. Most of you don't remember the Civil War, do you? You weren't here? I know we have a few older members. We have those who have experienced wars through World War I and II and Vietnam and Korea and Afghanistan and Iraq and all these other places, Kuwait. But when it struck home, this was a war on our land. A lot of people were wondering: Where is God? What is going to happen?

When you hear this word: Not one stone upon another and around the world we see the brokenness. This is a sign of brokenness to me. As you see the news of churches crumbling and going down and people not coming. You see, the brokenness isn't about the physical out there. We are broken inside.

I don't know about you. I've been broken many times. I'm not talking financially, but I've been there a couple of times too growing up. We are broken people. We hold bitterness and envy and pride, are often not just and not fair and sometimes we are uglier than we like to do. And in the midst of this, God says: I have come to bring your kingdom that you might know me and that you might praise me. We don't come here to praise God getting, we come here to praise God for being. We are God's children and all that we have to do...I said when I came up in the first service to the altar I just said: Lord, thank you for this day. Thank you for those who have come. May something be said or done today that will touch someone's heart that will draw us closer to You, that we might know that God is present with us.

It's that time of year, in just a week we will be having our church conference. And in the midst of that we review and like most denominations, most churches have about a third of their members who are active, which means we have two-thirds who never show in a year or so. And I'm wondering where are you that you are so lost? Is it because the programs that we do or the ministry is so boring? And so people go knocking and they find out things and one story I read was someone knocked on a door and a man finally let them in and they said: You know, we've missed you. We were wondering what we could do. They start shaking their fingers at them and he says: I will tell you why I don't come to church. And they said: Why? He said: Because I read the papers. They said: You get caught up in the sports section and get late or what's going on here. No. Well, why is it? He says: I'll tell you why. The world is awful. It's an awful place and the church can't do a thing about it. My wife died a year ago, all that I read is war and rumors of war. All I see is the tragedy and the murders and strife and the economy and all these problems. I go get my groceries and stuff, come back and I'm just waiting for my time to go. That's a joyful visit.

I want you to know something: that guy is terribly wrong, terribly wrong. From the day I was little my parents told me about my loving God. They never said because God loved me and because I loved God that my life would be good. I have seen the demise and the death of

people who I have loved. I have seen the ups and downs of my own life because of my own bad decisions, some good decisions that just didn't turn out right. I have seen disappointments. I have seen failure, but what I have seen the most is resurrection. My life has come up and down and up and down, but there is always an up because we choose the resurrection. The disciples were ready to give it all in and this is why that man is wrong. I want to tell you he is wrong. Don't get so low that you can't remember the resurrection, that those who came and they were hearing all that story that nothing would be better.

I found this quote of Ford: If you think you can do a thing or think you can, you are right. I believe we can do anything in the name of Jesus Christ. I was young once. And I was taught that from the time I am born in Christ I can grow and mature in my faith to learn that I can overcome whatever obstacles come before me. And so it was when I wake in the morning, I choose like the children, I choose to believe that Jesus Christ reigns. I choose to believe in the blessings that Almighty God presents to all of us. It's not a matter of waiting, it's a matter of choosing today. Not waiting just for the end day.

The disciples didn't wait. When Mary Magdalene and the others went back and found them after the resurrection morning and they thought it was over, Peter, who was the doubter and Thomas and John and the others ran to the tomb with excitement. Their fear was gone and they said: Before we die, we are going to tell the world and that's why we are here. We have been given the Word of God to transform. I refuse to think it is over. I refuse to think anything else but the power of God through you, through me and others who claim Christ cannot change this world. We choose faith, not fear.

I was on the internet checking on this ministry this week and I found this gentlemen who I've spoken about before, Lowell Gess, from out in Minnesota. I met him in 84, I've met him over a dozen or so times since then. He studied in 1954, he began his ministry there. And after a year or so doing some medical work he thought he needed to be trained as an eye surgeon. He came back and took that training and he went over and he said I need something more. I don't want to just fix their eyes. He studied and became a pastor, enough school is enough school. He has been working in Sierra Leone since 1954. In 2016 when Ebola hit he told his family: I've got to go. And they said: You are 95, you don't want to do that, you may die. He said: I am going to die anyway. He went and helped because the Ebola was letting an infection in eyes.

This picture was taken in August. He is 98. He went to Sierra Leone five times this year. And I'm thinking: I know how beat I am when I do it once. See, there is not a time for retirement from God's work. He believed in the resurrection power. His family are all on mission kind of work because he knows God had something for him beside this world to do.

What do you believe? What is it that God is calling you for? When I looked at this Henry David Thoreau thing I saw this week he said: Americans work so much they forget to live. Is that what we're really going to do? Just work until we die? And get more houses and big-

ger things? Or do we want to transform lives for the Gospel? I want to be a part in my lifetime of transforming lives, but what is it that your eyes see? It is just not feeding the hungry. Before I die, do you know what I want to see? I want to see myself all the days of my life. I want to see us running with the energy and the power and the belief of those early disciples. I would like to see people at Calvary and people in every church come under such a fire that our love for God is bigger than our love for the world, that we aren't a club that meets on Sunday, that we are a people that the very being of who we are is a person of Christ. And that in our workplace people will hear the good news. Not preaching, not above, they will just see it in our living. They will know that all that we are is about Jesus Christ. They will know in our language and how we treat others and where we spend our time and what we do. We spend much time with things of this world that are temporal and will leave us with nothing but heartache. We need to move away from fear. We cannot be unwise to know that this world will be filled with pain. You can't live many years until you experience pain, discomfort, loss, disappointment, but we can know that in those paths of pain and suffering, we can find glory to God and thanksgiving for whatever we have had.

And we can set ourselves free from those chains, free from those losses that we don't understand, to understand that God has something more for us. Our actions need to speak boldly for Christ that we can go out and stand strong.

When I was surfing yesterday about that doctor, I saw these pictures of women and children, they are starving. And I've seen those things in the United States of people that struggle all the days of their life and you say: how can they keep going? They keep going because of a God they believe in and a God that says: If you trust me, I will be here for you.

Henry David Thoreau says: It is not enough to be busy. So are the ants. The question is: What are you busy about?

We are in the saving business for the Kingdom of God, changing lives that people don't know. It is fine to feed, it is fine to clothe, it is fine to build shelter. If people don't have a relationship with the Living Lord, we have failed them, because all else will fail. God says in Proverbs 8, we hear these words: Those who search will surely find me.

I don't know about you, but when the wars hit in Jerusalem in those early days, the people of God, the Israelites, thought it was over and God said: It's not over. It's a new beginning and God promises that what we think is the end, when we lose someone we love; what we think is the end, when we lose the job of our hopes and dreams; when our relationships are broken, it's not the end. There is a new beginning. Every generation has had these words about destruction, war and the end times. And it is still not the end. I'm not worrying about the end. How about live for today? And today claim the beginning that is yours; claim it.

I remember when I was reading Dear Abby some time ago and they reiterated this woman who was about 36 years old. She said I wanted to go off to school. I went through college,

started medical school and dropped out because I became expectant and now I'm almost 40 and I don't know what to do because by the time I finish med school and get out I'd be like 50 some years old. And Dear Abby just said: Whether you do it or not, you are still going to be 50 years old.

I don't know what it is you have in mind for your life today. None of you are 98 yet. That guy was over there five times this year at 98. I've said it before: most of us, like 99 percent, are called right here, right here where you are in Harrisburg, with your family, with your friends, but what do you get called to to make a difference? When Jesus spoke to those disciples, he was saying: Find out what it is that you can bring the Kingdom and the test was going to be as they took the Kingdom out there, to have the living presence of God.

I see God in these children when I see their smiles and when I see the smiles in the hospital and other places and I hope people see it in me. It's life. What are you taking to your office? What are you taking to your family, to your spouse, to you partner? Are you giving the best? Are you giving life?

There are a lot of times people want to go to their doctor and they get too heavy. We don't eat right, we don't exercise and then we want saved. Can't you just give me a pill to make it all right? It doesn't quite work that way. The Kingdom is not going to come without some discipline. It is not going to come without some work. It is not going to come without our faithfulness to it. And in faithfulness, what happens? We grow. I am not the same man I was as a kid. I'm not even the same man that I was last evening, because in Christ we grow all the days of our life.

I believe He is calling us, God is calling us, more than ever, to wake up. This isn't a threat about the end. I'm not worried about the end. If we live for God, we are God's. He called us His own. It is saying we need to wake up. We need to wake up because the war around us isn't this kind of war anymore. The war is when you read the papers and you see the suicide rates among teens. The war is the opioid addictions. It is the drug addictions. It is the hopelessness of young and the teens who wonder if they will ever be a light for them. We are at a spiritual warfare now, because people need to know God has a purpose when they think there is no other purpose and we have a God who says to us: there is hope, hope for today and hope for the future, because God needs us. This God, this Lamb of God, wants to pull us in. The most beautiful words were said at the last children's sermon this morning. I asked them the same questions: What makes you happy? And little Riley said: When I get to cuddle with my little sister.

The world we live in needs a lot of cuddling right now. Can I say it? We are broken. We need healing. We need the end of the variety of isms, the hatred of the politics, the meanness even among us. Because the ugliness that we chatter about in our homes, in our families, among our partners and our families, when we put on a smile, we don't need to be fake We could talk about problems right up front, speak about them and bring healing and move. But

talk without action nets nothing. We need to be the people today who bring Christ alive in our lives. He promises to fill us if we will do so.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, you have given us everything that we need to find peace in this world. And we get so hung up in the temporal things of houses and furniture and clothing and food and stuff. And it will all end one day and we miss living. Slow us down. Open our eyes, open our hearts, open our ears, that we might hear and see the needs around us and the brokenness, that we might be healers all. We ask in Your Holy Name. Amen.