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First Presbyterian Church

Subject: Motivation

July 8, 2012

Prophetic Entertainment

Primary Scripture: Luke 4:14-30

Secondary Scripture: Ezekiel 33:30-33

+this is a direct transcript so grammar is not good always

SO WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO BE HERE THIS SUNDAY, TO COME OUT ON A BEAUTIFUL SUMMER SUNDAY, TO COME AND TO GATHER FOR WORSHIP?

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU?

WAS IT HABIT AND IT'S JUST THE CUSTOM AND TRADITION?

WAS IT A GIRLFRIEND, A SPOUSE, A MOTHER WHO MIGHT HAVE HELPED PROD YOU TO COME HERE?

WERE YOU MOTIVATED TO COME HEAR BEAUTIFUL MUSIC AND MAYBE LEARN SOMETHING?

WERE YOU MOTIVATED TO COME AND TO EXPERIENCE THE TRANSFORMATIVE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST?

WHAT MOTIVATES US TO GATHER FOR WORSHIP?

I'LL BE HONEST.

THIS TIME LAST WEEK I WAS ACTUALLY TRAIL RUNNING OUT IN BOULDER, COLORADO RATHER THAN GATHERING FOR WORSHIP.

AFTER THE SERVICE, AFTER OUR RUN, MY WIFE AND I, WE SNUCK INTO A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AND THE PASTOR SPOTTED US AND SAID, OH, I DIDN'T NOTICE YOU IN THE SERVICE.

GUILTFULLY, SHAMEFULLY I ADMITTED THAT WE HAD BEEN RUNNING ON THE TRAILS AND ALSO THE FACT THAT I WAS A PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER.

BUT WHAT MOTIVATES US TO COME TOGETHER FOR WORSHIP, TO COME?

IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, OUTSIDE OF COLLEGE AFTER WE GRADUATED, HOW OFTEN DO WE HEAR SOMEBODY TO LECTURE, TALK FOR 30 MINUTES?

WHAT MOTIVATES US TO COME TOGETHER?

I'VE BEEN WRESTLING WITH THAT QUESTION ALL WEEK WHEN I READ THE EZEKIEL TEXT AND THE LUKE TEXT.

HERE ARE TWO TEACHERS THAT WERE ABLE TO GATHER A CROWD AND WHAT WOULD MOTIVATE THEM TO COME TOGETHER?

THIS SUMMER I READ IN FASCINATING BOOK CALLED "THE SHOOTING SALVATIONIST."

IT'S A STORY ABOUT J. FRANK NORRIS, THE FIRST MEGA CHURCH PASTOR IN ALL OF AMERICA, PASTOR OF FIRST BAPTIST OF FORT WORTH, TEXAS.

IN THE 1920s HE LED A CONGREGATION OF 4,000 TO 6,000 MEMBERS.

HE WAS FAMOUS NOT ONLY FOR LEADING A LARGE CHURCH, BUT HE WAS ACTUALLY RATHER CONTROVERSIAL AS WELL.

HIS DELIVERY STYLE WAS A MUCH MORE EMOTIONAL AND HIS ATTEMPT IN A WAY TO MANIPULATE PEOPLE TO COME FORWARD TO ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST.

HIS FUNDAMENTALIST BAPTIST CHURCH HAD A HARD TIME WITH HOW HE WOULD DELIVER HIS MESSAGE BECAUSE THEY FELT IT HAD LOST THE DOCTRINE, THE TEACHING TO IT.

HE GOT IN TROUBLE AS HIS SANCTUARY WOULDN'T HOLD THE 6,000 PEOPLE WHO WOULD WANT TO COME TOGETHER, AND SO HE WANTED TO BUILD A NEW SANCTUARY, BUT THE CITY OF FORT WORTH WOULDN'T LET HIM.

SO ONE DAY THE SANCTUARY MYSTERIOUSLY BURNED TO THE GROUND AND THEN HE WAS ABLE TO REBUILD THE SANCTUARY HE WANTED BUT WAS INDICTED AS AN ARSONIST.

TEN YEARS LATER STILL WITH A CONGREGATION OF 4,000 TO 6,000 MEMBERS, HE GOT INTO A FIGHT WITH THE CITY OVER PROPERTY TAXES AND HOW MUCH THE CHURCH OWED.

HE REVELED IN THE PUBLICITY AROUND IT AND IT GREW INTO A HEATED DEBATE UNTIL ONE SATURDAY AFTERNOON HE WAS IN HIS PASTOR'S STUDY WHEN HE WAS CONFRONTED BY A MAN AND J. FRANK NORRIS SHOT THIS UNARMED MAN IN HIS OFFICE AND HE DIED.

HE WAS ARRESTED THAT DAY, LET GO ON BAIL AND ENDED UP PREACHING THE VERY NEXT SUNDAY IN THE PULPIT.

6,000 PEOPLE, MORE PEOPLE THAN HAD EVER BEEN TO THEIR SERVICE, FLOCKED INTO THAT SANCTUARY.

AND AS I READ THAT STORY, IT MADE ME WONDER WHAT WOULD MAKE PEOPLE WANT TO COME AND TO WORSHIP GOD BY AN INDICTED ARSONIST AND A MAN NOW ON TRIAL FOR MURDER?

WERE THEY THERE TO EXPERIENCE THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST?

OR WERE THEY THERE BECAUSE OF THE SPECTACLE THAT J. FRANK NORRIS HAD BECOME?

HE ANNOUNCED IN THE PULPIT THAT SUNDAY THAT HIS NEW MISSION INITIATIVE WAS TO HAVE 1,000 CONVERTS FROM THAT SUNDAY UNTIL HIS TRIAL BEGAN IN SIX MONTHS.

ALWAYS A MAN FOR PUBLICITY, USING THIS, DEATH OF ANOTHER PERSON, AS A WAY TO FURTHER AND GROW HIS CHURCH.

WHEN HE FINISHED PREACHING AND DID AN ALTAR CALL, HE GOT A RESPONSE OF THREE PEOPLE, THE SMALLEST AMOUNT THAT EVER RESPONDED.

IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE PEOPLE WHO HAD GATHERED IN WORSHIP WEREN'T MOTIVATED TO SEE THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST AND TO BE TRANSFORMED, BUT TO WATCH THIS SPECTACLE OF J. FRANK NORRIS UNFOLD IN FRONT OF THEM.

I SEE THE SAME THING HAPPENING IN OUR TEXT FROM EZEKIEL.

EZEKIEL 33.

EZEKIEL HAD SPENT 32 CHAPTERS PRONOUNCING THE FALL OF JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE, TELLING THE PEOPLE THAT THEIR WHOLE WORD, THEIR CITY, THEIR ECONOMY, THEIR LIFESTYLE, EVERY THEY HELD DEAR, WAS ABOUT TO FALL AND BE DESTROYED.

AND THEN IN THE 33rd CHAPTER JERUSALEM FALLS.

EVERYTHING AROUND THEM IS UNCERTAIN AND WAVERING, AND SO THE PEOPLE FLOCK TO THE FEET OF EZEKIEL.

A CROWD IS DRAWN.

A CROWD IS GATHERED BECAUSE HE WAS POPULAR NOW BECAUSE HIS WORD HAD COME TRUE.

THEY RESPONDED TO SEE THE SPECTACLE THAT THIS PROPHET HAD BECOME.

BUT GOD REMINDS EZEKIEL.

HE SAYS THAT MY PEOPLE COME TO YOU AS THEY USUALLY DO AND SIT BEFORE YOU TO LISTEN TO YOUR WORDS, BUT THEY DON'T PUT THEM INTO PRACTICE.

WITH THEIR MOUTHS THEY EXPRESS DEVOTION, BUT THEIR HEARTS ARE THERE FOR UNJUST GAIN.

INDEED, YOU'RE LIKE A LOVE SONG TO THEM, AN INSTRUMENT THAT PLAYS WELL.

THEY HEAR YOU, BUT THEY DON'T LISTEN TO YOU AND PUT INTO PRACTICE.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE SCRIPTURE, OF GOD'S STORY, OF GOD'S WORD TO US IS THAT WE HEAR THE WORDS, BUT IT FORCES US TO RESPOND, FORCES US TO LIVE A LIFE THAT IS DIFFERENT, THAT IS TRANSFORMED, NOT JUST TO HEAR THE WORDS, BUT ALSO TO EMBODY AND TO LIVE THEM OUT.

THESE ARE WORDS THAT HONESTLY DON'T DRAW A CROWD.

THESE ARE WORDS THAT CAN PUSH AND PROD US AND CHALLENGE US.

THAT'S WHAT WE SEE HAPPENING IN THE STORY OF LUKE AS LUKE 4 UNFOLDS.

IT'S THAT JESUS RETURNED TO HIS HOMETOWN LED BY THE SPIRIT AND THAT EVERYONE PRAISED HIM, EVERYONE IN THE REGION OF GALILEE PRAISED HIM.

THEY ALL GATHERED IN GREAT EXCITEMENT TO SEE THE SPECTACLE OF THIS PERSON COMING TO TOWN.

BUT BY THE END OF THE STORY, BY THE END OF THAT SAME DAY, THEY HAD DRIVEN JESUS OUT OF THEIR TOWN AND HAD PUT HIM TO THE EDGE OF A CLIFF READY TO THROW HIM OVER AND PUSH HIM OUT OF THEIR LIVES FOREVER.

WHAT DID JESUS DO IN THAT DAY TO GARNER SUCH A RESPONSE?

IT WAS JESUS'S MESSAGE.

IT WAS THE WORDS THAT JESUS SHARED THAT PUSHED THEM AND FORCED THEM TO RESPOND IN SUCH A MANNER.

JESUS WALKED INTO THE SYNAGOGUE, SEEMED LIKE JUST AN ORDINARY SABBATH.

AT THE BEGINNING HE HELD TO THE CUSTOMS.

HE WALKED IN AND WAS HANDED A SCROLL.

IT WAS TYPICAL THAT ABOUT TEN YOUNG MEN WOULD STAND UP TO READ FROM THE SCROLL, SO HE WAS DOING NOTHING UNUSUAL AT THAT POINT.

HE WAS HANDED THE SCROLL OF ISAIAH, AGAIN A TEXT THAT WAS OFTEN READ.

BUT IT SAYS THAT HE FOUND THE PLACE WHERE IT IS WRITTEN, HE TURNED TO ISAIAH 61, WHAT HE'S ABOUT TO QUOTE.

THAT WOULD HAVE STARTED TO CATCH THE ATTENTION OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

ISAIAH 61 WAS A MESSIANIC TEXT.

IT WAS A TEXT ABOUT THE GREAT MESSIAH, ABOUT THE GREAT LEADER THAT WAS TO COME AND TO LEAD THESE PEOPLE.

HERE HE WAS IN HIS HOMETOWN.

WHO, THIS JOSEPH'S SON, WHAT IS HE DOING READING A MESSIANIC TEXT.

YOU CAN IMAGINE HIS EMPHASIS WHEN HE STARTS TO READ AND SAYS THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME BECAUSE I HE HAS ANOINTED ME.

I AM HIS ANOINTED ONE.

LITERALLY THERE HE'S SAYING I AM THE CHRIST, I AM THE MESSIAH.

HE IS MAKING A BOLD CLAIM THAT WOULD HAVE CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

AFTER READING THE TEXT, HE SAT DOWN AND IT SAID ALL THE EYES WERE FOCUSED ON HIM.

WHAT WAS HE GOING TO SAY NEXT?

UP TO THIS POINT IN LUKE'S GOSPEL EVERY WORD OF JESUS CHRIST IS A DIRECT QUOTE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT.

HE IS BUILDING HIS FOUNDATION FROM THE PAST, BUT NOW THE NEXT LINE IS THE FIRST TIME THAT JESUS INTERPRETS, THAT JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF.

HE SAYS TODAY, TODAY THIS SCRIPTURE IS FULFILLED IN YOUR HEARING.

NOT YESTERDAY, NOT THROUGH THE CUSTOMS AND THE MOTIVATIONS OF THE PAST, THE TRADITIONS OF OUR FATHERS, NOT TOMORROW, NOT WHAT WILL COME ONE DAY, BUT THIS VERY DAY THE SCRIPTURE IS FULFILLED IN YOUR HEARING.

HE'S SAYING AND MAKING A BOLD CLAIM THAT IT IS ME, JESUS, THAT I AM THE MESSIAH, THAT I AM THE ONE THAT HAS COME TO SET THE POOR FREE, TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS, TO GIVE SIGHT TO THE BLIND.

THAT IS WHO I AM.

AND TODAY THAT IS FULFILLED IN YOUR HEARING.

HE GOES ON AND TELLS THOSE TWO STORIES ABOUT ELIJAH AND ELISHAH AND WHAT HE'S SAYING THERE IS IF ISRAEL WILL REMEMBER THE LOVE OF GOD JUST WASN'T FOR THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, BUT ALSO CAME FOR NAAMAN AND FOR THE PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE WALLS, THAT MORE IMPORTANTLY THAT GOD HAS COME THAT ALL MAY FALL AT THE FEET OF JESUS.

YOU SEE, JESUS ACTUALLY UPSETS BOTH THE PROGRESSIVES AND THE TRADITIONALISTS.

THE PROGRESSIVES ARE RILED UP BECAUSE JESUS SAYS NO ONE CAN COME TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME, THAT HE IS THE CHRIST.

THE TRADITIONALISTS ARE UPSET BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT THE CUSTOMS AND RITUALS THEY PUT IN PLACE WERE THE WAY THEY ENCOUNTERED THE LIVING GOD.

JESUS IS SAYING, NO, THE LOVE OF GOD EXTENDS FAR BEYOND ME.

SEE, I THINK WE THINK THE MESSAGE OF JESUS IS OFTEN SOFT AND SIMPLE AND LOVING, BUT AT TIMES IT MOTIVATES AND PUSHES US AND FORCES US TO RESPOND.

THE SYNAGOGUE HAVING HEARD THIS, IT SAYS, IS FILLED WITH RAGE.

THEY'RE UPSET BECAUSE THEY REALIZE THAT THE WORDS OF JESUS DEMAND A RESPONSE, A LIFE CHANGE, A LIFE TRANSFORMED.

AND SO THEY PUSH HIM UP TO THE EDGE OF A CLIFF, READY TO THROW HIM OUT OF THEIR LIVES FOREVER AND TO BE DONE WITH IT.

THE TRANSFORMATION IS TOO GREAT, IS TOO HARD.

I'LL BE HONEST.

I HESITATE TO SHARE THIS NEXT STORY BECAUSE IT IS SO RAW AND REAL AND JUST OCCURRED FOR ME.

I HAVEN'T FULLY PROCESSED IT.

I WAS BEFORE THE SERVICE OVER AT STARBUCKS, AND I WAS SITTING THERE AND I WATCHED ABOUT SEVEN OR EIGHT YOUNG WOMEN WALKING DOWN THE STREET POINTING AND LAUGHING AND TAKING PICTURES IN STARBUCKS.

AND I WAS UNCERTAIN WHAT WAS SO FUNNY AND SO INTERESTING THAT I TURNED THE CORNER AND I SAW A MAN THAT I KNOW THROUGH MINISTRY DOWNTOWN SOUND ASLEEP IN ONE OF THE LEATHER CHAIRS WITH ONE OF HIS MOUTHS OPEN, AND THAT THE CROWD, THESE YOUNG WOMEN, WERE POINTING AND LAUGHING AND MOCKING.

THIS MAN THAT I KNEW HAS HAD A HARD LIFE AND THAT IF ANYONE DESERVED A TIME TO REST IN A CHAIR AND TO SLEEP SOUNDLY, IT WAS HIM.

AND MY HEART BROKE THAT MOMENT.

MY HEART BROKE NOT FOR HIM, BUT FOR THOSE YOUNG WOMEN, BECAUSE THERE I SAW A GROUP OF WOMEN WHO WERE MOTIVATED AND MOVED BY THE CROWD AND NOT TRANSFORMED BY THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST, AND THE MOMENT SLIPPED THROUGH MY FINGERS BEFORE I COULD FULLY PROCESS WHAT HAPPENED.

YOU SEE THE LOVE OF GOD FORCES US TO RESPOND IN TWO WAYS, THAT EITHER WE PUSH HIM TO THE EDGE AND TO THE HILL AND OUT OF OUR LIVES OR WE TURN AND SEEK AND TO FOLLOW HUMBLY IN THE WAY THAT HE GOES.

LUKE'S GOSPEL ENDS WITH ANOTHER ANGRY CROWD, A CROWD THAT HAD GATHERED SCREAMING CRUCIFY HIM, AND THEY PUSHED JESUS UP ANOTHER HILL.

THEY PUSH HIM ONCE AGAIN OUT OF THE CITY, OUT OF THEIR LIVES.

THEY WERE DONE WITH HIM.

LUKE TELLS US ONCE AGAIN WE SEE THE TWO WAYS WE CAN RESPOND.

FOR HIS DISCIPLES, HIS FOLLOWERS, HIS OWN MOTHER, IT SAYS AT HIS DEATH STOOD AT A DISTANCE, AT A LONG WAY OFF, AND THAT THERE WERE ONLY TWO PEOPLE BY JESUS' SIDE AT HIS CRUCIFIXION.

AS JESUS WAS NAILED TO A CROSS, AS HIS BLOOD WAS Poured OUT FOR OUR SINS, AS HE WAS SHOWING THE DEPTH OF THE LOVE OF GOD FOR US, ONLY TWO PEOPLE REMAINED BY HIS SIDE, AND BOTH WERE BROKEN, HURTING CRIMINALS.

THEY TOO HAD BEEN NAILED TO A TREE, AND THEY TOO RESPONDED IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS.

THE MAN TO HIS LEFT HURLED INSULTS AT HIM AND MOCKED HIM.

HE ACTUALLY QUOTED WHAT JESUS SAID IN LUKE 4 WOULD BE SAID ABOUT HIM.

HE SAID, JESUS, IF YOU ARE THE MESSIAH, THEN SAVE YOURSELF.

PROVE IT TO US, PUSHING FURTHER AND FURTHER JESUS TO THE EDGE AND OUT OF HIS LIFE.

THE OTHER CRIMINAL LOOKED AND SAW THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST POURING OUT FOR HIM.

TO JESUS, WHEN YOU ENTER INTO YOUR KINGDOM, REMEMBER ME.

HE RECOGNIZED HIM AS THE KING OF KINGS, AS THE LORD OF LORDS.

AND PROCLAIMED THAT THERE BY HIS SIDE.

YOU SEE, FRIENDS, THE MESSAGE OF JESUS FORCES A RESPONSE FROM US.

WE CAN EITHER PUSH IT TO THE SIDE AND OUT OF OUR WAY OR WE CAN WILLINGLY FOLLOW HIS VOICE THAT SAYS COME AND FOLLOW ME.

AND THANKS BE TO GOD THAT HE INVITES US.

SO, FRIENDS, I INVITE US IN RESPONSE TO THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST TO STAND AND SING HYMN 391, "TAKE MY LIFE."