



Sermon, June 6, 2021
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Junction City United Methodist Church

“Final Blessings and Partings”

Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Transitions and Final Blessings are Important in Bible and in Life

1. Examples: Think of the deaths of the Patriarchs, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who leave behind a blessing before they die.
2. Moses with Israel at the verge of the Jordan in Deuteronomy who sets before them choices of life and death, how to live or how to wander away from God’s path.
3. Elijah casts his mantle upon Elisha along the Jordan, just before Elijah is taken up in the fiery chariot.
4. Jesus’s final supper, and then his final admonition and command before his ascension.

Leavetaking:

We have had about 6 months to move through this process of preparing to leave – this time of transition, and the time is now upon us. It is a time of grieving and of anticipation – often conflicting feelings. It is a time for shifting relationships. As I leave, it is important for you now to look to a new person as your pastoral leader. This shift in relationship is important and necessary. Each of us comes with particular gifts and strengths. Scott has particular gifts and abilities for ministry, many of which are different from mine. You may be tempted from time to time to compare us. I would ask that you strive to refrain from making comparisons. Instead,

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please receive Scott with the same open arms and hearts with which you received me when I first came. God has richly blessed us in our time together, and God will continue to richly bless you under the capable leadership and loving care that Scott will offer.

On protocols of the UM system:

UM ministers are forbidden for one year following their appointment to maintain any pastoral relationship with their former charge. This includes marriages, funerals, counseling or offering advice on the internal affairs of the congregation. You will have a new pastor who will offer leadership for you, and these protocols are designed to provide the conditions whereby you will begin to forge those beautifully heartfelt and deep bonds of trust, love and grace that are the hallmark of true Christian community.

The Task Remains: Love God, Love your neighbors

“Go, make disciples, teach them everything I have commanded you, I am with you.” This is the mandate and charter for the church. There is no other purpose for the church. This is our entire and sole reason for being. It is out into the world that we are sent, to live the Path and emulate the Way of Jesus for the world to see that we don’t have to live in fear or hatred of one another, that truth is the only foundation worth building upon, that justice and mercy are the very characteristics of God that the world needs most, and that love is at the center of everything and love wins.

We all have our work cut out for us. Not just the work of one or two “hired workers.” It is the work of everybody. You all are disciple-makers, not the clergy. Clergy are here to guide, teach, counsel, encourage, admonish, but the work belongs to all of us. We are all starting a new chapter, but the plotline of the book remains the same: make disciples for the transformation of the world. This is our mission and our mandate: to love the world as God so dearly loves it and pours out himself to save it.

What I have received from being here:

- * You have trusted me, which has helped me to grow in my ministry
- * You have accepted and received with openness what I have to offer in way of skills and education
- * You have put up with my humor, for the most part
- * You accepted my interest in exploring the Path of Jesus as an entire Way of Life, and we have journeyed together in exploring this.
- * You keep trying to find ways of living out the message of the Christian faith, which has continually spurred me on to find new ways to make the good News of Jesus Christ relevant to our daily lives, including working on a book, that still is in process.
- * You have come to the classes I have taught and have encouraged me to continue teaching
- * You have loved me and my family in whatever guise it has presented itself. You have opened your hearts to Susan and have accepted her just as she is and what she has to offer as a person with no set of expectations placed upon her. This has been liberating to her and me as well.

These are the blessings I wish to leave with you in fulfilling this mission and calling:

- I pray for you that God will enrich your fellowship with new life and energy and that the boundaries of your ministry will expand into new territories.
- I pray for you that God will help provide you with the resources to achieve your dreams and to expand your ministry.
- I pray for you that you will not be satisfied with the way that things have been but that God will place in your hearts a holy dissatisfaction with the status quo and a holy hunger for fresh directions and creative ways to make God’s love real in our communities and world.
- I pray for you the fullest measure of grace and love and peace and mercy and joy that God can possibly pour upon each and every one

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of you. May you go each day with God, and may God go with you down whatever darkened path or harrowed hallway may be before you. May God’s light shine darkest corners of despair or anxiety. May you know that you are never, never, never alone, and that whatever may arise, it is not God that punishes you but who is instead by your side, carrying you, giving you strength, believing in you, and when that time comes for you to pass from this life into the next, that God stands always ready to receive you into his eternal presence. God is love, truth and justice, and these will prevail always in the end and in the final accounting. Let these things guide you, for they are from God, and because they endure, so will you.

And finally:

“Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.”

We love you forever.