



The Westminster Pulpit

Sermons Preached at Westminster Presbyterian Church
3900 West End Avenue Nashville, Tennessee 37205-1899

“Know the Love” **Sermon on Ephesians 3:14-21**

Donovan A. Drake

July 28, 2024

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Admiration often leads to imitation in your day-to-day repertoire of living life. You might catch yourself doing some gesture your father did. Or hearing your mother in your voice. Maybe a friend pops up in the sound of your laugh. We admire. We imitate.

Beth and I traveled to Scotland one summer and were fortunate to stay with a woman who lived on a beautiful farm. She wanted to be called Mrs. J. And she was a delight to be around. She possessed a charisma and by the end of the first day, our voices were changing! Magic! “Given each other a wee mindin,’ we were.”

Admiration leads to imitation. I thought about this as our scripture is the letter to the Ephesians because Biblical scholars are quick to comment that Ephesians was not written by the Apostle Paul. But he did call himself Paul. He wrote like Paul. Claimed he was in prison like Paul. Sounds like Paul. Acts like Paul. And Paul wouldn’t mind the imitation. After all, Paul wrote in Philippians...

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul would be flattered by the imitation. Oddly this one who says he’s Paul writes like Paul. Acts like Paul. This writer of the Ephesians doesn’t want us to imitate Paul, he wants us to “be imitators of God, live and love as Christ loved and gave himself up for us...”

It becomes his prayer. Listen.

Ephesians 3:14-21.

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit ¹⁷and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Paul writes, "I bow my knees before the Father..." Is that an imitation of Jesus? It reminds me of...

The night after they had finished eating after Judas had left the building on a mission to betray, on that darkest of nights, the midnight of the soul, "the mountains shake in the heart of the sea. They tremble with the tumult," Jesus went into the Garden of Gethsemane to steady himself. He bowed his knees and prayed, "Father, if it be possible, take this cup from me... yet not my will, but thy will be done." On his knees.

Have you ever been driven to your knees in prayer?

I remember doing just that when I was still in my 20s. Beth had given me a kiss and gone off to work. And I was doing a job that I did not want to do, and I had no idea what I wanted to do. To not know one's purpose is awful. And there, as I was walking through the bedroom, I dropped to my knees. I wept and I prayed. "What? What do you want me to do, God?" I don't recommend coming to that point, but if you do, God is there.

Yet, kneeling in prayer can be a discipline.

I remember Freddie Sherrill, who was on staff in the church in Morganton, who would place his shoes far under his bed at night. And while he was there on his knees, he would say a prayer to thank God for the day that the Lord had made. The people he encountered. The needs he met. The love he discovered. He'd pray.

And then he said, "I'd crawl into bed and the next morning, I'm on my knees again to retrieve my shoes from under the bed." While on his knees, he'd thank the Lord, for this is the day that the Lord has made. Lord, use me as an instrument of your peace.

The posture of prayer. Now, when I put on my shoes in the morning, sitting on the corner of my bed, I think of Freddie. I should imitate Freddie. I should, but I don't. There are a lot of things I should be doing, but I don't do. Not sure why.

When I change my posture, it somehow changes me. I can't explain how posture has an effect, but it does. It was kind of like when I stopped taking communion and started receiving communion. I know Jesus says, "Take, eat." Nothing wrong with taking. But there is

something in the posture that changes, I don't know my heart rate, my blood pressure, my sugar levels. I don't know, but I tell you I can feel the difference between when I have to reach, grab, take, versus cupping my hands and receiving.

The mere act of cupping my hands - just doing this - makes me feel better. You should try it, now, or when you go home. I know I'm starting to sound like Paul; I hear him in my voice.

I pray... ..that God may strengthen you "in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love."

It is a fascinating prayer to me. It is the passion of Paul, well, for any writer of scripture to persuade, because what they have is good news! It changes everything, "And it is my prayer that you know what I know..."

We know this feeling every time we come back from someplace great. "Oh! You just have to see it. You just have to go." "You have to go!" And when my son spent a season in London, he took the train up to Scotland, and stayed with Mrs. J. And then we all teamed up on McKenzie, our daughter, who also spent a season in London. She had to go see Mrs. J.! I'm now telling you... You have to go!

I think we heard something like that from our youth who went to Montreat. It's an answer to prayer. You have to know this love, it's everywhere! That our youth would have an experience where they taste and see that the Lord is good. In a culture now that can't taste and see that the Lord is good, in fact, the Lord is up to no good. I heard from a mother the other day, and he said to her, "Mom, as far as I can tell, religion has started every war known to humanity."

Now, I'd take the boy who said that aside and argue that it is money and power that started every war and the those who should have known better allowed the church to be intertwined in the affairs of the state.

I would like to that that young man aside, and say, "What I want you to know is the harvest of the gospel when it lands on the heart, it provides light in the darkness. Come and see. Come and see that when you're desperate and driven to your knees, know there is a good shepherd. It will guide your life."

"Son, we are failures! We fail miserably just like everyone else. But the Good News begins with the gritty act of repentance. We can never repair the damage, but we can change our posture and move our minds away from that oldest question in the book, "What's in it for me?"

That question is a virus in our operating system.

"What's in it for me?"

If you have that virus in your marriage or any relationship, it will work itself into every part of that relationship. You'll be angry at everything she does. He says! And whatever he does, she does, it's never enough. "It's never been enough. "It's always what he wants, it's never what I want. What's in it for me?"

Someone asked me, "How would you sell someone on Jesus?" And I flippantly said, "Here's your cross." I don't know how to sell anyone on Jesus, except what I do know surpasses all knowledge. My life has been filled with people, who ask, "What can I do for you?" "How can I help?" "What do you need?" "How can I pray for you?" My life has been moved by a Spirit that I don't understand. It moves me to see people who need. My life has seen prayers answered. "God, what do I do?" And I'm amazed. Not by what I do, but by what you do. Where is this coming from?

"Son, I pray that you might know... Daughter, I pray that you might know "what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

You see, admiration leads to imitation. Or is it that imitation leads to admiration? Or is it imitation leads to

Copyright©Donovan A. Drake 2024