

07/16/17 BUCYRUS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

“WHO WILL THEY SERVE?”

Pastor Mike Corwin

Text: Judges 2:10-13 God’s Word: Amos 8:11-14

I - DIFFERENT TIMES:

My wife and I recently received an invitation to attend our 45th High School reunion. We have decided not to attend this year, but it got me to thinking about all the ways that life has changed in those 45 years. And as it usually does, it caused me to stop and think about how faith has changed in this country over those 45 years too.

Crestline High School was not always the struggling school district it is today. It was a vibrant district who educated the children of those who worked at PPG, Timken, General Motors, and the railroad. Our senior class graduated 125 students. During my time in school, I participated in the band program and became the head drummer of the 100 students who marched in that band. Our leader, Harold Robbins, did a wonderful job of teaching us and we traveled all over the state winning awards for our performances. One year, in 1969 or 1970 we received an invitation to march in the Macy's Day Thanksgiving Parade. What an honor! We were all excited to say the least. But we did not get to go.

The churches found out that we would not be home in time to attend Sunday services on the week of the parade. They deemed this unacceptable and took it to the school board who refused to give the band its blessing to go. We didn't protest...our parents didn't go to the board and plead for us...we didn't sit around and pout. We stayed home, ate turkey with our families, and went to church that Sunday as we always did.

Can you imagine what would happen today? The kids would be vocal about the missed opportunities, the school board would have standing room only at their meeting to vote on the matter. No one would give a care about what the church thought or didn't think about the matter.

II - WHAT MESSAGE?

When this happened to me it didn't upset me because it was just a continuation of a message I had received all of my life...God is first and nothing else can take his place in the list of priorities. This message had been sent to me through my parents, my grandparents, and those who taught me and led me at the church.

I wonder what message we are sending today? The schools could care less about the church and no longer hold to the tradition of not scheduling events on Wednesday nights or Sundays. If

they don't schedule something then all the various travel ball leagues make sure they do. I know of one league that had tournaments this year over the Easter weekend...SUNDAY INCLUDED! The highest Holy Day of the Christian year was pushed to the side so girls could play softball.

I think this is a good day for this message. We have an inordinate amount of our people who are involved in agriculture and the Crawford County Fair. I joke that some of our people must be Hindu because once the cow shows start we lose them until the end of the season. I've never really focused too much on this because traditionally our farmers and animal folks have upheld the basic beliefs of our Christian society. But I guess this year I can no longer count on that. The ones who I have been telling you are the future of our church aren't here today because they are at the fair. I expected that. What I didn't expect is that the church now even has to compete with the fair. If you look at the fair schedule for this day you will find that there is a church service being held today in the horse arena at 9AM. The trouble is they also scheduled a 5K Stampede/Walk event at the same time. Guess where a number of our youth will be? The stampede walk would be an excellent guess. So much for our Christian values being shown at the fair.

III - WE TEACH THEM:

Now...before you hate me too much let me tell you this. I don't hold the kids responsible...I hold the adults. Kids learn what they see and hear. So the question becomes how have we shown them that it's okay to put God farther down the list of priorities in life? If they have faith it's because someone passed it on to them. But the job doesn't end there. We are also supposed to show them how to practice it...how to grow it into mature faith. Whether you have any of your own children here or not doesn't matter. Kids are still watching you to see how you worship...what your priorities are...how important is your faith to you.

I've made people and churches mad for years now asking them questions along the line of when you cancel things like Sunday School and choir for the summer how do you expect them not to get the message that God and worship are optional? When you are the average Methodist who attends church 1.8 Sundays a month, why wouldn't they think they could stay home too? When you give less than 2% to the church, how do you convince them God commanded us to tithe 10%? What does it say about the importance of God when you can sleep in, play golf, or go shopping instead of getting up and attending church? When's the last time you stood up to a coach or school board member and told them about how important church and family time is so they should stop scheduling things on Sunday?

What standards are you holding yourself too when it comes to making God the #1 priority in your life? As people, and especially the youth, watch you go about your walk with God, what do they see? Is he a priority or an afterthought? I don't think there is anything wrong with any of these things. My grandkids are involved in sports and the fair but they are also well aware of the fact that God is more important than any of it. They know that it's their relationship to God and his Son Jesus Christ that allows them to fully love what they're doing and it's God who gives them the gifts to be able to do. God first...everything else after that.

IV - TEXT:

This has been a principle of our faith since our earliest times. Our children fall away from God when we don't tell them about God, when we don't pass the wisdom of faith on to them, when we don't tell them, show them, and teach them about God.

Isn't this the story of the ancient Hebrews? They were saved from starvation by the hand of God through Jacob's son Joseph. He interpreted the pharaoh's dreams when no one else in the royal court could and grew to be the second in command of Egypt only out ranked by Pharaoh himself. When his people were starving, he took them in and made their home in Egypt. Over the years, new Pharaohs took over who forgot Joseph and his standing in Egypt and they made slaves of the Hebrew people.

God heard their cries of slavery and sent Moses and delivered them from that slavery. He did it by mighty acts like the plagues he sent upon the Egyptians and the land. Like parting the Red Sea so they could cross safely to the other side and then drowning the Egyptian Army behind them. He led them by pillars of fire and clouds. He gave them food from heaven and water from a rock. He displayed his power to them and showed them miracles over and over again. He took them to the Promised Land and defeated all those who stood in their way. He established them as a major power and kingdom and put righteous leaders over them.

But then it happened. People stopped telling their children the stories. They quit hearing about how great their God was and all the things he had done for them. They became lackadaisical in the reverence and their worship of their God. They did not effectively pass on the importance or the wisdom of God to the next generations and the Hebrew nation ceased to be the God fearing people they had been. They stopped making God a priority and then we see passages like this:

Judges 2:10-13 (TMSG)

¹¹The People of Israel did evil in GOD's sight: ¹²they served Baal-gods; they deserted GOD, the God of their parents who had led them out of Egypt; they took up with other gods, gods of the peoples around them. They actually worshiped them! And oh, how they angered GOD ¹³as they worshiped god Baal and goddess Astarte! ¹⁴GOD's anger was hot against Israel: He handed them off to plunderers who stripped them; he sold them cheap to enemies on all sides. They were helpless before their enemies.

Anywhere that you read that the people "Did evil in God's sight" it means that they sinned. They sinned not just a little but a lot.

They sinned because they quit serving the God of their people and began serving the gods of the people around them. They not only served them...THEY WORSHIPPED THEM! And that made God very angry. They served the god Baal, who was a representative of the Canaanite god

Hadad. The god of rain and agriculture. And they served the goddess Astarte, the goddess of the evening star. The goddess of fertility, love, and war who was often linked to Baal.

This made God so mad he finally gave them what they had coming. He allowed others to steal the crops they had planted and taken care of - crops supposedly guaranteed by worshipping Baal. They got carried off year after year. He allowed his people to again be conquered by foreign powers and again turned into slaves.

All because they had not been taught to serve only their God. They had not been taught that their God was a jealous God who would stand for no other gods before him and that their God was not happy with his people worshipping idols. Their ancestors had not done well in teaching them who to serve.

V - WHO WILL THEY SERVE:

So the question that smacks us in the face this morning when it pertains to us and the following generations is, "**WHO WILL THEY SERVE?**"

Have we done our jobs in showing them that God is the #1 priority in this life so he will be in the next? Have we shown them by our lives and the wisdom we pass on to them that God comes first and everything else comes after that?

Will they serve the living God, or will they be consumed with a reverence and serve the little gods of life:

- TV - computers- music - movies - electronic games
- Tweet - twitter - FaceBook - e-mail - Skype - snap chat
- clothing - dating - designer drinks - parties
- Money - clothing - gossip
- Sports - social events - fairs

The answer is it's all up to you. They will live and pass on what we teach them. Do you want a text book to do it all...or **The Book**? Do you want the kids on the playground to give them their morals and ethics or do you want the kids in Sunday School with them to do it? Do you want the pop stars and actors to tell them how to live or do you want the preachers, teachers, and disciples to tell them?

When you look at the youth - not just the ones in the church but those out of it too - and ask "**WHO WILL THEY SERVE?**" The answer is simply "They'll serve who you serve."

AMEN