

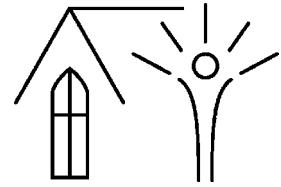


ROSELLE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Our Mission Statement:

*"To Know Christ,
To Grow in Christ,
To Show Others Christ"*



May 28, 2006

Sermon: "In Between Times"

Acts 1:1-11, Luke 24:44-53

Reverend Thomas Kim

Several men were dressing in the locker room of an exclusive health club. A cell phone sitting on one of the benches began to ring. A man picked it up and the following conversation ensued:

"Hello?"

"Honey, it's me."

"Sugar!"

"Are you at the club?"

"Yes."

"Great! I am at the mall two blocks from where you are. I saw a beautiful mink coat . . . It is absolutely gorgeous!! Can I buy it?"

"What's the price?"

"Only \$1,500.00."

"Well, OK, go ahead and get it, if you like it that much . . ."

"Ahhh, and I also stopped by the Mercedes dealership and saw the 2006 at a really good price . . ."

"What price did he quote you?"

"Only \$70,000 . . ."

"OK, but for that price I want it with all the options."

"Great, before we hang up, something else . . ."

"What?"

"It might look like a lot, but I was reconciling your bank account and I stopped by the real estate agent this morning and I saw the house we had looked at last year . . . it's on sale!! Remember? The one with a pool, English Garden, acre of park area, beachfront property . . ."

"How much are they asking?"

"Only \$ 750,000 . . . a magnificent price, and I see that we have that much in the bank to cover . . ."

"Well, than go ahead and buy it, but just bid \$ 720,000. OK?"

"OK, sweetie . . . Thanks! I'll see you later!! I love you!!!"

"Bye . . . I do too . . ."

The man hangs up, closes the phone's flap and raises his hand while holding the phone and asks: "Does anyone know who this phone belongs to?" (The Dynamic Preaching: Classic Treasury, pp 1209-1300)

Obviously this man was authorizing some expensive purchases without the proper authority to do so.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven he made a promise for his disciples. This was not a counterfeit promise made by one without authority. It was the kind of promise you could take to the bank. Let's see what kind of promise Jesus made to his disciples.

Today, we celebrate Ascension of the Lord today. Barbara Taylor (Christianity Today, May, 1998) says about the strangeness of celebrating Ascension Day in the church. After all, we are celebrating "the day the present Lord became absent." We are celebrating the loss.

I still clearly remember the day my parents left Korea for America on May 17, 1986. We could see an airplane landing and taking off in front of the gate. We carefully watched the plane my parents took leaving Korea till it disappeared into the sky. Even though we knew we would meet them in two years, to watch my parents leaving was terribly sad and painful, and feeling of absence was so strong.

So, let's think about the feelings of the disciples. I can imagine that they might be terrified as they watched Jesus ascending and disappearing from their sight. But the Bible records a strange reaction and response of the disciples. As they heard, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" (Acts 1: 9-11a) they stopped gazing into the sky, and "they returned to Jerusalem with great joy!" How could they do that? How could they return to Jerusalem with great joy in the midst of their loss? What kind of attitude did they have?

The scriptures show us what lies behind their attitude. Just before the Ascension, Jesus made a promise for them, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." (Acts 1: 8a) The promise of the Holy Spirit would be there. They were between the Ascension and Pentecost - between loss and promise. However, they stopped gazing back at their loss, and started focusing on the promise they received from Jesus.

That's important because all of us at one time or another are exactly there-between loss and promise, between pain and joy, between things that you have lost and things that have not yet unfolded, and you're in that limbo of the "in between times." An example is when someone close to you dies. You are in a vacuum. And the pain of the loss is there, and the future doesn't seem to be anywhere, and you are in between.

Those of you who have lost your jobs, you know what being in between means. You can be vice-president of a company one day and lose your job the next day. And all of a sudden, all those things that were important are stripped away, and you don't have a new job.

So you see this in between time of the disciples is something that you and I know from our experiences. Will I ever get better? Will this mental or emotional or physical illness ever leave me? We all know those questions.

When we are in the in between times, when we are sorrowful and sad because of loss, God wants us to hear a voice, "Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" We need to stop gazing at the loss or the past. During the in between times, there are people who become captives of the past with resentment and pity, and people who focus on the future with hope and faith.

Do you remember a story about two monks who were walking together through the country? Their journey brought them to a river. As they prepared to cross the river, they noticed a beautiful woman who was obviously afraid of the water, and petrified and helpless.

The younger monk just ignored her and began to cross the river. However, the other monk picked up the woman, and carried her across the river, and put her on the other side.

The two monks walked along in silence for several miles. Finally, the younger monk asked the other, “How could you have touched and carried the woman? You broke your vow!”

The older monk paused for a moment, and then answered, “Oh, my good Brother, I dropped her off ten miles ago at the bank of the river. Why are you still carrying her?”

Isn't this the reason the disciples heard, “Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?” We need to stop gazing at loss or the past. During the in between times, it is our choice to become captives of the past full of resentment and pity, or to focus on the future and move on with hope and faith.

We are to continue our journey with great joy as “the disciples worshiped Jesus, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.” And that is faith, “Continuum!”

There is a monastery in Portugal that is perched high on a three-hundred-foot cliff. The only way the monastery can be reached is by a terrifying ride in a swaying basket suspended from a single rope pulled several strong monks. One day, an American tourist was about to ride up in the basket. However, he became very nervous when he noticed that the rope was quite old and frayed. Timidly, he asked, “How often do you change the rope?” One of the monks replied, “Whenever it breaks!” (Attitude Is Your Paintbrush, James Moore, pg. 21)

Many people today treat faith like that. They never turn to faith until something breaks. But the Christian faith is a lifestyle that works in practical daily living. It is the way to live. It is the way to relate to other people. It is the way to stand during the in between times! The disciples worshiped Jesus, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple blessing God. Nothing special, but continuum! Persistence!

What we need in between times of loss and promise is to depend on faith and to focus on the promise of Jesus.

During the in between times, there is hope, and there is confidence, and confidence feeds attitude. The disciples had confidence because they believed and trusted in the promise of the Lord.

Winston Churchill planned his own funeral, which took place in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. In the service there were many triumphant hymns and passages from the Bible. But then came a surprise ending. As soon as the benediction was concluded, a bugler positioned high up in the dome of the cathedral played “Taps” – “Now the day is over.”

But then came the most dramatic turn. As soon as the bugler played the final note of “Taps,” another bugler, on the other side of the dome, began to play “Reveille” – “It's time to get up! It's time to get up!” What was Churchill trying to say? Simply this: For Christians, the last note will not be “Taps”; it will be “Reveille!” (Attitude Is Your Paintbrush, p. 102)

Now I would like to ask one question. Do you know the promise Jesus made to his Disciples? When we're stripped away and we're faced with the essentials of life and death, there's great promise there and yet hope for the future. In between times of Ascension and Pentecost, and in between Spring and Summer, Jesus tells us this morning, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” (Acts 1: 8a)