Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

October 28, 2018

Old Testament Reading; Job 42: 1-6,10-17

Responsive Reading; Psalm 34:1-8,19-22

Epistle Reading; Hebrews 7: 23-28

Gospel Reading; Mark 10: 46-52

Sermon Title: A-N-D

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: “And” this changes everything.

When I was reading over the scripture lessons for this Sunday I was surprised to see how many times the word “and” was repeated.

In the scriptures the word ‘and’ does not fit into what we learned in English class.

You never start a sentence with the word ‘and’. Um, ever notice how many sentences in the Bible start with the word ‘and’? It seems to me that in the Bible when a sentence starts with ‘and’ it tends to emphasize the sentence. Then when it appears in the sentence it often becomes a multiplier.

Let me reread some of our scripture lessons to you.

The Psalm starting at verse 2; My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; The humble shall hear of it AND be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me AND let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, AND he heard me, AND delivered me from all my fears. They looked to him AND were radiant, AND their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried out, AND the Lord heard him, AND saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear him, AND delivers them.

Now in Job; AND the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed, the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then all his brothers, all his sisters, AND all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to his house, AND they consoled him AND comforted him for all the adversity that the Lord had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver AND each a ring of gold.

There are a whole lot of ANDs there. A whole lot of petitions for God’s help AND a whole lot of prayers answered.

Notice that there is quite a bit of cause and effect there also. It seems that the Bible is trying to tell us that a good way of getting God’s attention is to pay attention to God.

Job admits that he was out of line by calling God out and demanding that God answer his questions and he owns his mistakes. God then asks him to pray for the three friends that thought they knew all the answers and were perfectly willing to put God in a box. God said that he was upset with Job but was really ticked off by the friends that thought they knew God so well that God was not allowed to act as God saw fit.

The ironic thing is that these friends were accurately quoting the Bible as it was printed in those days. This might be a warning to us to not jump to judgment of others. God says we can call someone foolish but we are never allowed to call them a fool. I believe this implies that when we call someone a fool we are taking on the authority of God and in essence we are damning that person. Big No No!

The gospel also speaks to this concept in that it advocates that we should not wish to withhold God’s blessing because we find the person seeking them to be obnoxious to us. Blind Bartimaeus was crying out to get the attention of Jesus and many warned him to be quiet. Who did this blind beggar think he was, making a scene, raising his voice and demanding attention from this Jesus? Lucky for us God does not judge our worth based on our clothes or disabilities.

Bartimaeus was shown his worth to Jesus when Jesus restored his sight AND Bartimaeus followed him on the road. Another lesson learned here, when God blesses us we need to choose to follow him on the road.

Yesterday I had the honor of officiating at Ken Drew’s funeral.

I heaped a lot of praise on Ken and Ruth but I feel that I understated their value to God’s plan. AND These two were true saints who lived the life designed by God for us all to emulate. AND They were not rich but they made everyone that knew them richer in character. AND They had high moral standards but never withheld love from anyone. AND They loved each other, their children, grandchildren, community and church. AND If anyone had any faults they understated those faults and found something good to say about everyone they met. AND Wanda and I were enriched by their friendship and probably would not have become part of this congregation without their influence.

There are a lot of ‘ands’ in the Bible and a lot of ‘ands’ in all of us who are willing to live the Bible.

Hallelujah and Amen!