Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

May 26,2019

1st Reading; Acts 16: 9-15

Responsive Reading; Psalm 67

Epistle Reading; Revelation 21: 10, 22- Rev 22:5

Gospel Reading; John 14: 23-29

Sermon Title: YOU MAY BELIEVE

Summary: If you choose to believe you will have a helper who will help you do great things for God. If you choose not to believe then all bets are off.

You may believe. Hey man you gotta believe. You can do it. You can run faster. You can swim faster. You can jump higher. You can jump farther. You can make that shot. You can win that game. You can get a high score on your SAT, even without your parents bribing the judge. You can get that job, and on and on and on. When it comes to personal gain you have to believe in yourself.

BUT!

What if you want to do something really special? What if you want do something for God? Then how do you believe?

When it comes to yourself you can use a stop watch or a measuring tape. You can get a Regents book and practice doing tests to sharpen your mind and build your confidence. You can get job interview training. You can do all sorts of things to prepare yourself for personal challenges but how do you prepare yourself to be a meaningful Christian?

First, I guess I need to ask you to consider whether you want to be a meaningful Christian? For expediency let us assume you do. My next question might be, do you know anyone that fits that description? If so, then just follow their example and you can forget the rest of the message and you can take out your phones and play Just Fiends until you hear me say Hallelujah and Amen.

On the other hand, if you want to stick around and see if I can come up with something reasonably intelligent, or stick my foot in my mouth, then hang on here we go.

There are two possibilities here. One, you can listen to what God says and then when it happens you can have an ah ha moment. And/or you can listen to what God says and then trust that it will happen even if things don’t look so good just now.

The example I will use for the first is comparing it to a completely secular experience shared by my sister and I using our mother as the source of prophecy.

My sister, Sandy, was 6 years older than I so we did not share the high school experience at the same time. My mother was a school teacher with both experience in high school and elementary teaching. Mom always encouraged us in academics, saying that if we studied hard and got good grades we would benefit in the end. We were never home schooled but we were both home tutored.

In our sophomore years, separated by 6 years, we both went to school assemblies that were for inducting new Honor Society members. Most new members were” tapped in” in their junior or senior years, with just a few sophomores making the grade. In our separate ceremonies we both looked longingly at the potential, wishing we had studied harder. Neither of us was a straight A student, but more like the B or B plus variety. As the present member came toward us, we each moved back to let them get to the “obviously” more deserving student next to us. To our utter shock we got tapped to become new members.

After our identical physical reaction, we had an identical emotional ah ha moment. Ah ha! Mom was right and now we believed her “propaganda”.

Our gospel lesson speaks to this kind of belief. In the Message translation verse 28 says, “You’ve heard me tell you, I’m going away, and I’m coming back. If you loved me , you would be glad that I’m on my way to the Father because the Father is the goal and purpose of my life.”

Then skipping back to our Bible, “And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.” Ah ha! Mom was right. I mean Jesus was right.

Our reading from Revelation speaks to a future that is bright in the mist of a troubled time. Revelation speaks of a time when

“a new Jerusalem” would descend from the heavens. God and Jesus would be both the temple and the light of the land. The gates would be open all day and there would be no night, no darkness to hide evil. Nations would walk in the light and be respectful to God and to each other and their leaders would all be honorable and unselfish. Nothing bad could ever enter the city. The tree of life once prohibited from Adam and Eve would be the source of year-round fruit. Where it used to be that if you saw God’s face you would die now everyone would see his face and his reflection will be on their foreheads.

Sounds like a far cry from North Korea building missiles, Iran rattling sabers and governments like America and Britain in fighting and unable to get anything accomplished.

Jesus says that we may believe but can we believe? That is going to take faith. In Mark 9: 23&24, Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord I believe; help my unbelief.” This is so me.

To believe at times like these we need to read and consider Matthew 24: 6, Jesus said, “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.”

You need to lift up your face to the Lord and believe. Jesus promised that he would die on Good Friday and that he would rise 3 days later. God kept his promise then and he will keep this promise too.

Become a “Meaningful Christian”. You can do it, and we have the proof right here in our congregation. Danny has attended this church for 14 years and never missed one single day because he “just did not feel like coming to church”. The only times he missed was when he was sick or could not get a ride the 22miles to church. Danny is an honest to goodness prayer warrior, he prays for us and he prays for people he does not know all over the world. Danny is proof that we not only may believe but we can believe, and in believing we can make a positive difference for God.

Today Danny gets his Ah ha moment as we confer on him membership in this church.

Hallelujah and Amen