Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

May 5, 2019

1st Reading; Acts 9: 1-20

Responsive Reading; Psalm 30

Epistle Reading; Revelations 5: 11-14

Gospel Reading; John 21: 1-19

Sermon Title: **Arise and Go to a Street Called Straight**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Ananias went. Will you?

Have you ever gotten a directive from God?

Several times in the Bible individuals are often given specific directions from God to do something or go somewhere.

Abraham was told to leave his family and country and go to a place that God would show him. Moses was told to go to Egypt and free the Hebrews from Pharoah’s rule. Joseph and Mary were told to take to baby Jesus and flee to Egypt. Jonah was told to go to Nineveh. Several times King David was told to flee to somewhere or go into battle somewhere else.

Does God still interact with our lives or was that something that just happened in Bible times?

I think that it is still happening on a regular basis. I believe that a lot of people still “hear” God but to do so they have to be in tune with Him.

If you want to go where God wants you to go you first have to be where God wants you to be.

That sounds like a pretty high falutin’ comment but it is not all that unreasonable. God does not want us to be perfect. As a matter of fact, he was pretty careful to assure that we would not be. “No one is good, no not one for we all fall short of the glory.”

Case in point: King David did several awful things but it was said that, “he had a heart for God”. That is, he almost always kept God in mind and when he screwed up, he sought God’s forgiveness. God has a thing for interacting with losers and makes them come out smelling like a rose. Moses was a murderer, Jacob was a scoundrel, and Gideon was a coward.

If you want to be where God wants you to be then just follow the commandments of Jesus, “This is a new commandment that I give you, Love others as I have loved you.”

A small child explained it this way, “Jesus says love everybody, even the ones that you hate.”

That about covers it.

Sometimes God speaks to you by putting you where you need to be. The Good Samaritan would never have helped the victim of the assault if he had not been on the road just after it happened.

Earlier this week I was eating dinner in the dining hall where I live and I suddenly needed to use the rest room. That never happens to me. On my way I came upon a woman in a wheel chair waiting for an ambulance. She was stressed and needed someone to pray with her. I no longer needed to go, I needed to pray. Hello God, thanks for using me.

In our scriptures this morning God comes to Ananias in a dream and tells him to, “Arise and go to a street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold he is praying. ‘And in a vision, he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.”

Say what!? God you want me to go to the guy who came here to kill me and other believers by arresting us and feeding us to the lions in the sporting arenas of Rome? Ananias went.

Sometimes God asks to do things that do not seem reasonable to us.

Several years ago, while I was driving truck and Wanda was healthy, I got a call from her. She was all upset and thought that I would be mad at her. We had an apartment for rent and she was interviewing applicants.

One applicant came in that was burned on her face and arms from a fire in her previous apartment. The fire started because the candles she had been burning for their fragrance caught her curtains on fire and when she opened the door the back draft blew the fire into her. She was challenged, on assistance, dirty and had 5 children by 5 different men and two of the children were teenagers that would live with her.

Wanda politely told her she would check her references and get back to her, thinking it would be a cold day in hell when she would risk our lives by renting to this woman. The apartment was directly above ours.

As Wanda started to look up references of other applicants she heard or felt a voice telling her she should rent to the burn victim. Wanda tried to dismiss it and went back to finding a phone number. Then the voice said,” you don’t need a number, you have the number of her daughter right in front of you.” Wanda verbally said, “I’m not renting to her.” And the voice said, “Call the daughter NOW.”

Wanda told me that she thought I would think she was crazy but she really believed it was God speaking to her. I assured her that I believed her for similar things had happened to me.

We rented her the apartment and when she left due to health problems, we had to gut it and get rid of all the Cockroaches.

We could never figure out why God wanted us to do this but we both believed that it was definitely God’s providence and someday something good will come of it.

Arise and go to a street call Straight. A street called Straight.

Straight is used several times in the Bible. The straight and narrow. Make a straight highway in the desert for the Lord. And so forth.

I reiterate what I said earlier. You have to Be where God wants you to Be if you are going to hear Him ask you to go to where He wants you to go. Where you go is important to God. You may be a Moses going to free the Hebrews or you might be the burning bush that lights a fire under Moses.

Ananias Went! Will You? A street called Straight awaits you.

Hallelujah and Amen!