Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

August 26, 2018

Old Testament Reading; 1st Kings 8: 22-30

Responsive Reading; Psalm 84

Epistle Reading; Ephesians 6: 10-20

Gospel Reading; John 6: 56-69

**Sermon Title: KEEPEER OF THE GATE**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: 2 things are needed here. 1. A gate to something worth keeping, and 2. a keeper who is up to the task.

Back in 2001 I took a course for Commissioned Lay Pastors put on by the Presbyterian Church for the Genesee Region. It was an extensive study on how to fulfill all the duties of an ordained minister if a church was without one.

At the completion of the course the Ministerial Committee would evaluate the students and decide if they met the criteria of a Commissioned Lay Pastor.

When it came my turn the two co-chairpersons of the committee convinced the rest of the committee that I did not make the grade because they thought that I did not speak of God’s authority but spoke on my own authority.

I was crushed. My mentor explained that they were the keepers of the gate with the responsibility of not allowing anyone in who would hurt or devalue the temple. Karon challenged me to search myself and see if I could discover where I fell short.

I did and I could not find anything. I checked with churches where I had been preaching for years and they could not see that I fell short on honestly preaching the word of God.

Because I had been rejected by those gatekeepers I sought out and found a legitimate denomination that would ordain me as a minister and that is why I am in this pulpit today.

As Joseph told his brothers when he was the number 2 man in Egypt, “You meant this for evil but God meant this for good.”

God’s got this.

God not only got me into the ordained ministry but he gave me a new respect for keepers of the gate and how they should handle their responsibility.

Our Old Testament reading for today is the prayer of Solomon as he dedicates the new temple.

Solomon was the wisest man in the world but his wisdom was worldly wisdom. He built a temple that was supposed to be a structure to praise God with size and expensive architecture.

He imported Cedars of Lebanon, the best wood in the world, and overlaid it with solid gold. He had the most expensive tapestries that money could buy and embroidered them with gold thread. It goes on and on. The temple was impressive to say the least.

To Solomon’s credit he knew that even this magnificent structure could not hold God but that it would be a place from which people would pray, and from which God would hear those prayers and respond.

This temple was later torn down and looted of all of its expensive artifacts by invading enemies of Israel.

Later Paul would explain that real treasure is not what people keep in their safes but what they have in their hearts.

When I drove truck from coast to coast I read about everything that Luis Lamour wrote and a lot of what was written about him. As a child in North Dakota he went to church one Sunday to find that the day before, the church burned to the ground. The whole congregation was there looking at the ruins.

Louie asked his father, “Dad where is the church?” His father answered, “The church is standing around looking at this hole in the ground,”

The treasure was not the building the treasure was the people.

Paul referred to it as treasure kept in clay jars. It is not this mortal body that gives us value, it is the love of and through Christ that makes us special.

The church is the temple but the treasure is not in the architecture or the trimmings, it is the people and I personally think that our church is priceless.

Our church is worth a vigilant keeper of the gate. The keeper of the gate must keep out hate, prejudice, gossip, back stabbing, and a better than thou attitude.

Paul was right when he said, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Paul told us to put on the full armor of God. The armor of God that will be able to withstand in the evil day will not be made up of steel and chain mail. The armor of God will be spiritual gifts of God. Internal armor that will provide external protection.

Gird your waist with truth, put on the breast plate of righteousness, the footwear of gospel of peace protection, and above all, take up the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Put on the helmet of salvation and your only weapon, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Truth, righteousness, footwear to spread the good news of the gospel, faith [that thing that will keep you strong no matter what people say to you or about you] and the helmet of salvation so you can keep your head on straight.

Finally, the only weapon you need is the word of God.

And God said, “Do not worry what you will say for I will put the words in your mouth when the time comes.”

So, this is the money shot, the true worth of a church is in the loving, compassionate benevolent hearts of its members. I believe that we have the richest church that I have ever been in.

If you have someone come into our area that has never seen Letchworth Park you take them to see it. If you have someone come into our region that has never seen Niagara Falls you take them to see them. Therefore, it only makes sense that if someone has never seen the richest church in America you should bring them here.

So, put on the full armor of God and open the gate by inviting someone to our treasure. Do not abandon Jesus because he is the one that has the words of eternal life. Where else would we go? He is the son of the living God. Hallelujah and amen!