

## Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Reverend Dr. Daris Bultena

February 1, 2009

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

<sup>15</sup>The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. <sup>16</sup>This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." <sup>17</sup>Then the LORD replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. <sup>18</sup>I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. <sup>19</sup>Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. <sup>20</sup>But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die."

Mark 1:21-28

<sup>21</sup>They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. <sup>22</sup>They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. <sup>23</sup>Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, <sup>24</sup>and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." <sup>25</sup>But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" <sup>26</sup>And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. <sup>27</sup>They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." <sup>28</sup>At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

### **"Tremendously Alive"**

**I've been watching them now. And some are timid. As soon as another comes they shy away. I have been watching them at the bird feeder. There are those little birds—the sparrows, whether they really are or not I do not know, but I call them sparrows. They are fine when they are by themselves, but as soon as one of those big birds comes along off they fly. They are timid.**

**There is a whole microcosm of the culture right there in the birds of at the bird feeder. Some are timid—others have this tremendous presence that is not scared away. The issue of timid or tremendous is not necessarily size dependent either. Nothing frightens away the little cardinals; they have this tremendous presence even in face of the big black birds.**

**Timid or Tremendous. Those are two choices—two qualities---two ways of being. Two options on how we get to live our lives. Many of us live some of both. We are creatures that quickly move from tremendous to timid.**

**Indeed, timid is not something that we would accord to our culture. In fact, timid to me says reserved and shy. I find that there could be those who should have more reserve and shyness going on. It seems as if everyone is willing to challenge you these days—in your face on every topic. The old sense of authority has passed away and now it is all up for grabs. People are not timid on the road. People are not timid in the store. People are not timid face to face in the office. People are not timid.**

**It is hard to be timid these days. It is the big and loud and brassy that gets something accomplished. Try being nice at the repair shop. It works for sure, but sometimes you have to be more assertive in order to get your needs met. It does not seem right, but it is.**

**Sometimes we have to bulk up and buck up. The reality of it is that often it seem only when we are mean – oh then, and definitely then we get some action. Use that mean voice. Timid? Hardly.**

**But you know for all the rough exterior and ways people treat each other in our world---for all of that I think there is a whole lot of timid going on. People, all of us, have this fear---and fear is the root of being timid. There is this fear about living.**

**Where are we going? How is the world going to end up? How am I going to end up? What is going to happen to us? What will become of you?**

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**The world, the culture—none of it gives us any good answers to those deep down in there fears that we all have going on all the time. Those fears are part of this age but they need not be that which defines our character.**

**We are called, as Christian people, to live larger than our fears. We are called to realize that all our fears have been supremely answered and subsumed into the person and event of Jesus the Christ. Let me call that living tremendously.**

**To be tremendously alive.**

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**The promise of the Deuteronomist is that God will raise up from among the people a prophet of proportions that will speak God's word to them and enlighten their minds and hearts with the knowledge of God. The promise is that God will do this among them. The promise is that they will know God first handedly.**

**That is tremendous living—knowing that we are dwelling in the presence of God and that God's word is coming to us—that it is for us and part of who we are and what we do. That is being tremendously alive.**

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**When Jesus was in the synagogue teaching in Capernaum, the people were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. They knew there was something so**

**inviting about Jesus—something so authentic that is called to them and was more real than what they usually heard taught by those learned ones among them.**

**It was one of moments when all was really real and they knew that this one before them—this Jesus was someone they wanted to hear more from. This Jesus was so fully alive that he just exuded the very reality and awesomeness of God.**

**They were in this wonderful place with him—and they knew it. They knew it—they were tremendously alive.**

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**Our living tremendously now---oh, that is what we are called to do. We are called to live large---that is my understanding of being tremendously alive ---living largely into Christ.**

**It is my belief that there is a pattern for such living right here in this little text from Mark. We see it in what Jesus did there that day. Notice what he does – he worships. He teaches. He deals with the tough stuff.**

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**He worships.**

**On entering Capernaum he makes his way to the synagogue. He worships. What is the commandment? “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.” Worship is not for weekends that there is nothing else to do. Worship is not optional activity. It is commanded and as such it is part of the rhythm of how things are to be in our world. We are to worship—and without that Sabbath worship there is something missing in our living.**

**The essential nature of worship—hey, I know I am preaching to the choir here. You are here! It is great you are here! Understand the very**

nature of your creation is that there is this being inside of you that is called to worship and needs worship as much as you need air, soil, food, and water. It is in the mix of our humanness.

And worship is something that we are to be doing all our days too. Worship does not just happen here in this wonderful sanctuary room--- worship happens at your desk or near your nightstand as you breathe out that “thank you God” for all God has done and given you in the course of your day. Worship is when you breathe in and out that reality that you know love and you are connected to more than yourself. That you are part of the world and have something to share, give, do—that is worship.

We need worship.

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He enters the synagogue and he taught them.

Jesus taught them. And he taught them in a very special way. Not as the scribes but as one with authority. What would that mean? Not as the scribes---you see each Scribal school had a particular perspective on the law. And the listener could discern which school of thought that particular scribe belonged to by what the scribe was teaching.

Jesus did not seem to belong to any one particular school of thought. There was this amazing and tremendous nature to the way he taught. He taught them.

We teach. We all teach. Our lives teach. Each and every one of us is a teacher. I do not know if you have thought of it in that way. But our lives teach. We teach people about who we are in how we are with them. We teach people how we understand love and the nature of all that is love.

We teach all the time.

**We teach with our lives---we teach what matters to us. That teaching is not done with words—it is done with living.**

**Want to be tremendously alive—pay attention to what you are teaching? What are you teaching your children by how you live? What are you teaching your neighborhood? What are you teaching yourself? What are you teaching your friends?**

**Teaching is something Jesus took very seriously—it was an activity with which he spent much time.**

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**He Worshiped.**

**He Taught.**

**He dealt with the tough stuff.**

**There was that one with the “unclean spirit” as Mark puts it. We do not understand our world in the same way that the first century did. So were this written today we probably would not use terms like “unclean spirit.” Whatever it was, however, Jesus dealt with it.**

**He handled the tough stuff as I like to put it. That is tremendous living. When we are brave enough to handle the tough stuff in life. Do not think that life is easy or that being a Christian will make it all simple and clear. Life and issues and families and living can be very difficult.**

**The challenge of faith—the being tremendously alive moment of it is that opportunity to see that we need not be timid of the tough stuff. We do not need to shy away from or be afraid of the difficulties that come our way in life---we can face up to the tough stuff.**

**Jesus did and God empowers us to do it.**

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**How is it that we can do it—because we have this tremendous love---  
this awesome, tremendous love that is named Jesus---we have him and he  
gives us the grace to walk this way so that we can be tremendously alive.  
And that is what you are!**

**Amen.**