

“CHURCH IS SOMETHING YOU ARE, NOT WHERE YOU GO: CALLED TO SOMETHING BIG!!”

Lenten Thursday 4

Peace Lutheran
Grass Valley, CA

March 19, 2015

Ephesians 3: 14 - 21
John 14: 1 – 12

Teaching points from the Message:

1. When we see ourselves as ‘church’ and when church is about being rooted in Christ and teamed together with others for the sake of the kingdom; we begin to understand that we’re into and onto something big.
2. Jesus says: “You will do greater things than these.”
3. God’s idea for ministry is “something big.”
4. The Law of Influence says: **One life touches another life and potentially both lives are changed; one life touches another life and potentially the entire world is changed.**
5. Because we are ‘church’ our lives are felt around the world, doing things that are “God sized big.”

THE MESSAGE:

San Francisco, War Memorial Opera House: Opening Night of the “Phantom of the Opera”. The orchestra begins the overture. The curtain rises. The show begins. Oh my!

Wrigley Field, Chicago: The Cubs have made it to the World Series. It’s game seven, Cubs trailing 5 – 4, bottom of the ninth, bases loaded. Let’s make it 2 balls and one strike. Oh, my!

Memorial Stadium, Lincoln: Seats on the 50 yard-line, 7 rows up. The score is tied. Nebraska’s ball on the Ohio State 40 yard line. Just over two minutes to go. Oh my!

All pretty exciting. Yep! But look around. In the opera house, in Wrigley Field, at Memorial Stadium, or any place else a crowd gathers. What if you were the only one there?

It's always it is always more fun to be part of a crowd. It's always more fun to be part of something big. The bigger the better.

Whether it is an arts event, a sporting event, a family reunion, a fair, party or the church, we long to be part of something that is bigger than we are. It is more exciting and stimulating to be part of something big.

When it comes to understanding that church is who we are; when it comes to understanding that church is about being rooted in Christ and teamed together with others for the sake of the kingdom; we begin to understand that we're into and onto something big. We begin to see that we are hooked up with and hooked together with a God who has places to go and big things to do. We are a part of some kind of wonderful synergy—the multiplication of the sum of the parts.

You see, Church, the kingdom and work of God is something big!! Church is who we are so, you see, we're something big. God's call is for us to be part of something huge and exciting and significant—His church in mission/ministry. Somehow I know that I rather skip over parts of the lesson from the Gospel. It is Jesus' words regarding the life of the community of faith after Jesus ascends into heaven. It is about what will happen when God releases the power of the Holy Spirit on Earth.

Notice what Jesus says: "You will do greater things than these." The "these" refers to the things Jesus has done. Jesus says, look around at the miracles, the casting out of demons, the works of wonder the teaching, the missionary work. Look around. You think I've done great things. You will do greater things than these. You will see things in ministry as church that make what I'm doing look like sissy work. Jesus is saying that with the power of the Holy Spirit, taken seriously, we're on to something big.

You see, being called to something big isn't our idea. It was God's idea. Being called to something that is outside of us and beyond us isn't our idea of ministry; it is God's idea. It is God's idea and because God gives the power to make it happen. We will be embraced with a perfect love and a spirit that moves among us so that as church, through us extraordinary things happen.

This isn't a particularly "Christian" story, but it makes the point.

Some years ago, a group of generals were determined to turn back the tide of democracy. They placed Mikhail Gorbachev under house arrest. Meanwhile a tank rumbled into Red Square to capture second-in-command, Boris Yeltsin. But Yeltsin did something quite extraordinary. He leaped atop the tank and welcomed the tank commander over to the side of democracy. With that single event communism lost its final prospect of a return to power.

A reporter interviewed Boris Yeltsin and asked what gave him the courage to take that stand. Yeltsin said it was the story of Lech Walesa, who led the Solidarity movement that had brought democracy to Poland. When Walesa was asked what caused him to make the stand that brought down communism in his land. Walesa said he was inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights marchers in the United States. When Dr. King was asked what spurred him into action as a leader of his people, he talked about the influence of Rosa Parks, the black woman who refused to sit in the back of the bus simply because she was black.

Now here's the question for the day: Is it possible that the fall of Communism began with one African-American woman who refused to sit in the back of a bus?

This is what's suggested in a book: *The Amazing Law of Influence*. The Law of Influence says: **One life touches another life and potentially both lives are changed; one life touches another life and potentially the entire world is changed.**

When one person's life touches another person's life something extraordinary happens. There's the possibility that both persons might experience the power of the other's influence, but because our lives are so connected to so many other people's lives, the impact of that event might be magnified into something more important than we might ever realize. Rosa Parks could not know when she refused to obey a law she considered evil and absurd, that today her name and influence would be felt around the world, but that's how influence works.

That's what it means to be part of something big. 2000 years ago a man walked this earth. Not just any man -- He was the Son of God. But his work magnified into something that only God could ever realize. His work magnified into mission and ministry that changed the world.

Jesus says, think that was grand. Greater things than these are in our future. Greater things than these will be done by His followers. Greater things than these we'll accomplish because Church is who we are. The gift of the spirit is ours. God has big things in mind.

So, if you think it absurd that your life can't be felt around the world. Think again. Church is who you are. As Church—as part of this synergistic spirit powered team -- YOU are called to something big!!! Called to something of God's size BIG!!

Amen.