

"Live to the Lord"

OT: Psalm 103:1-5, 19-22

NT: Romans 14:7-12

Read Romans 14:7-12

A captain of a boat lost his way in the middle of a storm. While trying to control the ship and maneuver to avoid sinking, he started feeling anguish and frustration. The waves became bigger; the noise of the water hitting the boat, like a feather carried by the wind, almost led him to despair. But he did not give up and tried harder every time the waves hit the boat. In his desperate attempts to stay strong and keep the boat steady, he was unable to hear one of his crew officers yelling at him. "Captain, Captain!" kept yelling the officer, while holding on to one of the deck's bars to avoid falling off the boat. "Captain, Captain!" insisted the officer.

This time, while trying to approach him, a huge wave almost made the boat tip over and the officer fell and rolled on the deck till he luckily found another rail to hold on to. After several attempts, the officer finally was able to reach his fighting, drenched, and tired captain who had started to yell out his frustrations and thoughts to the raging waves.

"If I am a good hard-working man, why does this happen to me? I have been sailing the open ocean for years to fish the best catch and get support for my family!! Why, why, why???"

At that moment, his crew officer was able to grab the captain's shoulder and make him turn so that the captain could hear him. "Captain, Captain!" yelled again the officer.

The captain looked at him furiously for distracting him from his difficult task. "What do you need officer?! Don't you see I am trying to control the ship and find our way back?" complained the captain.

His officer kept holding onto the captain and pointed in the opposite direction, towards the stern. "Captain!" he replied. "The lighthouse is right over there, on the other side. We are going in the wrong direction!!!" ("The Lighthouse")

Have you noticed the confusion, which seems to pervade in our world today? People seem to be going in all different directions. Many have no aspirations to pursue. There is no direction to their living. There is no reasoning to their works. They appear to be in a hurry, but are rushing to what purpose? (None of us ever feel like this do we 😊)

If you do not live life with a purpose, you live life by accident. You could end up wandering from side to side down the pathway of life, never knowing the bounty that could be yours.

However, to live life with purpose is to take time to think deeply. Listen to God and your inner self. Be patient and understand your unique gifts and know the reason why you are here. There are many opportunities along the way to serve your purposes. Your highest purposes should be in giving and serving others. You do not need to expect anything in return. You will truly know the blessings of life when you can give of self, desiring nothing but the satisfaction of a job well done. Be true to yourself. Do not confuse yourself by living for God on Sunday morning and living for self the rest of the week. Do not confuse yourself by trying to be someone you are not. Do not confuse yourself by following the wrong people. Your living, and I would add your living to the Lord, is not to be compromised. God created you for a purpose. ("Don't Live Your Life By Accident")

To live to the Lord is our highest calling in life. To do so has the greatest return on investment, the greatest joy, the greatest accomplishment, the greatest benefit to humanity and creation. There is no substitute of a life lived to the Lord, and a death suffered to the Lord, even worth mentioning. So, let us get right to it then. How are we to live to the Lord?

To start, I think it is important to understand ourselves as "divine messengers" with the blessings of God inside us. We are created by God for a purpose and that purpose is to live as a witness to God and help reveal who God is to the world. We believe this and this is so because we know God and have responded to God's love for us by saying "Lord, Here I AM." Not everyone knows God, and some have even chosen to deny God intentionally, but just like God has not and will not ever give up on us, we are to never give up either. God can and will work through us when we open our hearts and heads and hands to God.

Another way for us to unpack what it means to live to the Lord, is to consider the words of the Heidelberg catechism we stated a few weeks ago in Q1A1: *"That I am not my own, I belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. And because I belong to him, Christ, by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly and willing and ready from now on to live for him."* The catechism continues by stating in Q2A2: *"There are three things we must know to live and die in the joy of this comfort and assurance and promise and good news. 1. That we are sinners and we fall short of God's glory, which causes us to live a less than desirable life, 2. That it is Jesus who sets us free from all of our sins and shortcomings, making it possible for us to have true life abundantly, 3. That because Jesus delivers and redeems us, we are to thank God and offer God our praise directly and through the way we live."*

Within this same vein, we can consider asking ourselves: How do I live a good story? How do I fulfill the story written by God for me? The answer can be found by making STORY an acronym. Surrender to God, even when it is difficult. Trust God's heart when you do not understand. Be obedient to God's commands even if you do not know all the details. Rejoice when you are living through a trying chapter. Then, yield to God's will

and God's way. How do I live a good story? Let go and let God and enjoy the story being written by our loving God.

Another way for us to unpack this text, and what it means to live to the Lord, is to understand that living for our Savior is more meaningful than living for ourselves. To live to the Lord is to live in relationship with God, who is with us in and through all aspects of our life, even our earthly death and divine transition to eternal life. And for that relationship to work, there are a few things we can make sure are present.

Praying. It is our personal relationship with God and God wants to walk with us and talk with us. God wants us to share our celebrations, concerns, and questions and God wants us to listen. Communication is vital in effective relationships.

Reading the Bible. Spend 5 to 10 minutes every day to understand the life of Jesus and the Love of Jesus in our everyday living. Meditate on the word of God. Repeat. You never know what message God might have for you, but you won't know for sure if you don't read or engage the Scriptures, which are full of promises and helpful hints.

Honoring God. God is all powerful, all knowing, present everywhere, and in all times. Because of this, we are to praise, thank, and honor God for all we have today and every day. The best way to honor God is to acknowledge and accept with an open heart and arms God's presence in your life and the unconditional love God has for you.

Living as God called us: Everyone of us is precious in the eyes of the Lord. You are beloved. I am beloved. Like a parent who longs for their child or children to grow up and do the right things and get the most out of life, God wants us to live and move and take pleasure in all our toil. This is not a free ticket to do whatever like the prodigal, but a charge to live the life to which we have been called: a life of goodness and righteousness. As God's children, that life is to be lived in line with the Lord's example, teachings, and glory.

Loving our neighbors. We hear this one often and the Scriptures repeat it often, but that is because it is necessary and important. It is not about us but about God and God's love for others. Although different in some ways, we are bound together in the most important way and that is in Christ. By loving our neighbors, we not only live silently to the Lord, but our loud.

Harry realized he needed to purchase a hearing aid, but he was unwilling to spend the much money. "How much do they cost?" he asked the salesperson. "That depends," he said. "They run from \$2 to \$2000." Harry was pretty tight with his money so he said, "Let's see the \$2 model." The salesperson put the device around his neck. "You just stick this big red button in your ear and run this wire

down to your pocket,” he instructed. “How does it work?” asked Harry. “For \$2 it doesn’t work,” the salesperson replied. “But when people see it on you, they’ll talk louder.” Ken Davis reflects- I realize this is a stretch, but when I first heard this joke I thought of how the same economic principle applies to our witness. We can spend thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours getting a seminary degree. We can purchase a huge Bible and carry it everywhere we go. We might wear colorful T-shirts and sport bumper stickers with a witty Christian message. But ultimately, it is our love for others that will enable people to hear our message “of living to the Lord” much more clearly.

“John 13:35- “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
(Ken Davis, Lighten up and Live)

Sharing our gifts. Jesus gave his life for us, a gift of salvation for us. We shall share our blessings, wisdom, wealth, out of our little or much -- and so, share your faith in many areas and ways. What we give is what is multiplied unto us, pressed down, and running over.

Encouraging each other. As God’s counterparts, we are to motivate, inspire, strengthen, and encourage others to live to the Lord. To do so within our own family units is a great place to start and sometimes can be the hardest, but we are not to let our encouragement, our celebration of God’s grace and inspiration to the next generation be confined to our own household. The good news of the gospel is too good not to be shared and spread as wide as we can, with whomever we can.

Co-operating with others. What you think and say may be different to what another may think and say. Therefore, we should consider and co-operate to understand each other’s perspectives. Why? Because Jesus came to bring unity to a divided people. Jesus came to bring us together, not filter us out and separate us. To live in community with others who think differently than you is part of what makes Christ’s tapestry of life majestic and beautiful.

Romans 14- Paul tackles the question of how Christians with different convictions about disputable matters should treat each other in the church. It works to express how we, as God’s children, are to cooperate with one another. It works to emphasize how we, as God’s children, are to live to the Lord. In Paul’s immediate context, Paul is writing to tell strong-Christians who feel free to eat and drink what was formerly forbidden under the law of Moses are not to flaunt their freedoms in front of weaker-faith Christians who are not convinced it is right to participate in those things. His direct correlation was about Jews encountering Jesus and some of his new ways of explaining things- especially the acceptance of gentiles at the table and in the kingdom. God did not just send Jesus for the Jews,

but for all people who would put their faith and trust in God. Paul encourages that neither group should judge the other but live according to their convictions revealed to them through Jesus Christ.

Another way to look at living to the Lord and dying to the Lord is an image etched in my memory bank forever. Several years ago, I went into a hospital room to see my grandmother in Charlottesville. In her early to mid-nineties her body was slowing down, and we could tell the end of her life on earth was near. She lived a very good life and a faithful one- as a daughter, sister, wife of a preacher, mother, teacher, grandmother, great grandmother. She biked and exercised and talked with people and loved a scoop of moose tracks ice cream with a little extra chocolate syrup. All of this is a big oversimplification of the woman she was but maybe it gives a small picture. The image etched in my memory is one of her reaching. She reached out to children as a teacher, to those in need with service organizations, to fellow residents of WC in Charlottesville just to give a smile and a hello, but this time, I saw her hands reaching up. She had a majestic glow and a true peace, and it was like her arms were outstretched waiting for someone to hold her hands. No doubt that someone was Jesus Christ, her rock and her redeemer, her Lord and Savior. There is not a shadow of doubt my grandmother lived and died to the Lord.

We are all divine messengers, blessed with the gifts of God inside us. So, when the storms rage and doubt begins to enter in and our knuckles glow white, may we all know in which direction we are to face. And whether we live or whether we die, may we all do so to the Lord, who gives us peace and purpose of the highest calling.

Let all God's people say... Amen.



Called Congregational Meeting
September 13, 2020
9:30 a.m.

Peter: Call to Order/ Quorum
Secretary for the Meeting will be Clerk of Session, Dave Tate.

Peter: The purpose for this Congregational Meeting is to receive and approve members to serve on the 2020 Nominating Committee.

Peter: I would now like to invite Donnie Ore, 2020 Chair of the Nominating Committee to present the nominees to serve on the 2020 Nominating Committee...

Donnie: On behalf of the Session, the following persons are placed in nomination to serve as the Nominating Committee (a Congregational Committee) for 2020:

Session Representatives: Myself...Donnie Ore (as Chair) and Laurie Sommardahl ('22)

Members at Large: Jenny Osinga, Jane Stallings, Bill Semones, Westray Nowlin

Peter: You have before you the nominations. Are there any additional nominations?

(If yes) We will note the names of those nominated and must have an in-person confirmation that they accept the nomination. We would then receive them by acclamation and vote to approve the nomination(s) from the floor. Moved. Seconded. All those in favor... any opposed. If additional names are approved, we add them and vote to receive the lot. (If no) Move to Motion:

Hearing none, the motion brought to you by the Nominating Committee is to receive these that have been named to serve on the 2020 Nominating Committee, effective today and ending December 31, 2020. Is there such a motion? - "So moved"... Is there a Second? ... All those in favor – "Yes" ... Any opposed- "No".

Peter: Thank you to all of you for being willing to serve. I now move that we adjourn this meeting. So Moved. Second. All in favor please stand. Close with prayer...