

September 6, 2015

Lay Sermon – Patrice Simon

“The Power of Vulnerability – The Gift of Surrender”

Scripture References – The Revised English Bible

Psalm 3:1-6 (for David)

Lord, how numerous are my enemies! How many there are who are against me, how many who say of me, “He will not find safety in God!” But you, Lord, are a shield to cover me: you are my glory, you raise my head high. As often as I cry aloud to the Lord, he answers from his holy mountain. I lie down and sleep, and I wake again, for the Lord upholds me. I shall not fear their myriad forces ranged against me on every side.

Ephesians 6:10-18

Finally, find your strength in the Lord, in his mighty power. Put on the full armour provided by God, so that you may be able to stand firm against the stratagems of the devil. For our struggle is not against human foes, but against cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark age, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, take up the armour of God; then you will be able to withstand them on the evil day and, after doing your utmost, to stand your ground. Stand fast, I say. Fasten on the belt of truth; for a breastplate put on integrity; let the shoes on your feet be the gospel of peace, to give you firm footing; and, with all these, take up the great shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the burning arrows of the evil one. Accept salvation as your helmet, and the sword which the Spirit gives you, the word of God. Constantly ask God’s help in prayer, and pray always in the power of the Spirit.

Romans 12:9

Love in all sincerity, loathing evil and holding fast to the good.

PLEASE PRAY WITH ME

“May the words of my lips, and the mediations of my heart, be pleasing to you my Lord God.”

Good morning friends. It's wonderful to see all of you! And good to be back at Community Church. I have so missed this beautiful sanctuary, its beautiful energy and of course, this faith community. It is truly amazing how when called, the ability to listen and hear becomes an aspect of faith. I also welcome those who are with us via live broadcast with *The New Church*.

While preparing for this day, I came across a journal that I received for a birthday a few years ago. It's a beautiful red-leather-bound journal with cream-colored lined pages with the Fleur de Lis (the lily flower) adorning the bottom of each page. I have a fascination for the symbol because of the representation of French royalty, signifying perfection, life, and light. Joan of Arc, an archetype of a woman I have identified with many times, carried a banner adorned with the lily signifying God's blessing when she led French troops into battle.

A bit of trivia friends, but said journal seemed to present itself while sorting out some stored boxes. I opened the journal and within the first few pages I read an entry describing the last time I delivered a sermon here. February 22, 2009. So 6 years later I've returned to be with you and share once again.

Our life's situation is not who we are. This I kept telling myself these last two years. You see I've been enduring what I have "**perceived**" to be hell. Many of you know I closed my yoga studio after 11 years of operation, under insanely challenging circumstances. Without the sharing of a magnitude of details, I will say that I understand why people have considered or even followed thru with taking their lives over a business loss.

Let me be clear that I'm not of that nature, but the despair, fear, and utter disappointment and thoughts of being a failure gave rise to thoughts of "getting it," that some beings see "no other way." I apologize in advance if this sermon is starting on a rather morose note. I assure you, it will not end this way.

I hope you all heard the use of the word **perceived**, because while enduring probably the most challenging challenge of my life so far, I **perceived** that all the work, time, money, and passion put into my 11 years was for naught.

The mind can be our best friend or our worst enemy. It can be a tool or a weapon. And for me I was being attacked by this thing called the mind incessantly. Please understand that all I've gone thru was and still is a battle beyond words, but I have learned to appreciate the situation as another

growth opportunity and an expression of my faith, endurance and surrender to the Spirit's guidance.

Despite my Joan of Arc strength, the power of knowing my vulnerability has allowed me to surrender.

We are not our life's situation.

Blessed am I that I had the gift of Bruce's counsel during these times. How wonderful for me that his calling to come back to CCCDM availed me of the chance to sit, cry, laugh and absorb his wisdom and loving heart. How fortunate, my friends, we have his counsel. The gentle giant, as I refer to Bruce (know you're watching, my friend), listened to my desperate pleas for an understanding of why and what now?? Of course, as always, he suggested that when you are not clear on action to take, "Don't just do something, stand there."

As I went thru my diatribe of the "why me" and the "how could this happen," again Bruce reminded me: "Where do you think you are, Patrice? This is a broken world, a beautiful broken world, with free will and no guarantees." That the free will of others participated in my circumstances, and that Spirit cannot step in and Spirit won't direct me at this time. I'm too raw.

That I needed to heal before getting my next marching instructions. He suggested, as many have heard him say, dive deeply into the situation and be with it. Bruce explained that I was in "grief," my system in shock, beat up, not a time to make major decisions – that ANY decisions made at this time would be made for the wrong reasons. He told me to "survive" for at least 6 months. To pray the best I could, to be brutally honest with God. And to LISTEN for the "voice."

Remember Elijah, First Kings 19. The small voice.

He reminded me that once I have felt (perceived) failure that badly, I'd never be fearful again of failure. He reminded me to hold onto the pieces that once illustrated the calling I had. But NOT to identify with them. Bruce suggested I make a list of all those beings that have come into my life during this ordeal that have assisted me. A very powerful exercise my friends, very telling and very comforting.

"Some may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one." The list of those who "cosmically showed up" during this time has been profoundly instrumental in my coping with the situation. I can truthfully say that in

a million years I would not have ever dreamt that despite the ordeal, my liaisons with earthly angels have been nothing short of miraculous.

One such angel introduced me to a wise and enlightened soul. He goes by the name Mooji, a spiritual teacher born in Jamaica whose Christ consciousness is profoundly rich. He conducts retreats in rural Portugal. His spiritual teachings include the Indian origins of Advaita, also known as Brahman, explained as pure consciousness. However, being raised by Christian parents, his love and devotion for Jesus are woven deeply into his teachings.

These woven teachings attracted me to listen to his messages.

These Christ-driven messages were often the nectar I needed to get past my despairing thoughts. Messages describing our relationship with God, that we are His children, that we must see this world as broken, but Divine and beautiful – the same message Bruce has taught us for decades. That doubt is not original, but beyond doubt is truth. “Doubt your doubts.” That failure can simply mean something did not work out.

That our meaning of failure is an outmoded way of perceiving a situation. That bringing light and consciousness to a perceived failure can change the matter at hand. That removing failure from our language might encourage us to see more clearly the TRUTH of the situation, opening the mind to possibilities and creativity.

Mooji teaches that pleasing God is foremost, that the more we please people, the more fault they find in us. Isn't that what our Christian faith is all about? That our relationship with God and the Spirit of Jesus is foremost. That knowing oneself thru our relationship with God with Spirit's influence will help us recognize who we are and our true nature and, knowing our truth, NO dark energies will have control over us.

That love prevails and is above all else – love of God, self and brethren. That we fall in love within our hearts first. That we keep our hearts open. That the heart speaks the truth, NOT the mind. That we remember: the Greatest Love was between Jesus Christ and God the Father!!

That each of us must stand up boldly to the glory of God. That we remember that it is out of love that often difficulties come, so we will fight with power and receive God's grace to endure. That we are never left entirely alone with the devil. That we make room for mistakes, and be kind to ourselves and others, but not keep company with those that cause us pain.

God's grace is always present, even if we are blinded by this temporal world's circumstances. Mooji mentions, "Let the One who created the world take care of it." The pleasures and pain of life are like the pendulum of a clock. Our minds "swing" with thought, but the closer we stay in the knowing that God and His grace are the absolute, the less reactive we are one way or another.

Where is the sage in all of us??

Our lives are not a straight line, discerning what is real and unreal is difficult, and some pain cannot be avoided. It is a broken world! Do we really know what we are doing here on this planet? Can we trust that God is completely in control? Can we accept His grace above all the phenomenal world's offerings?

My friends, I have examined my circumstances and am looking at the interpretation of them, and how my mind is fueling the events with conditioned responses. These are not "Pollyanna" mental gymnastics; rather, they are practical questions and solutions that are part of the examination. Yet the power of emotions and ego-related reactions often get in the way of the true meaning of the situation and the solutions.

The voices of doubt, despair, fear and the like IF ALLOWED creep in. Bruce reminded me that Satan puts a magnifying glass in front of our fears. These voices, both Bruce and Mooji remind us, are like thieves and prowlers. Would one *invite* them into our homes?? Why then into our minds? Is the door open? If so, shut it! Everyone who seeks the truth will come under attack at some time or another. Remember as well: Satan tries to drive our identity to the ground. This may be a good thing, however, for when we attach ourselves to our identity, it can only bring more pain.

Once in, however, identifying and acknowledging these voices are necessary to be able to "ask them to leave," allowing creative, positive, grace-filled voices to replace them.

Sometimes we are plunged into perceived darkness to get lost to all and everything, so we are forced to see our true selves and to ask who we are. Discovery of the essential self requires no distractions. It's time to go solo for a while. Being alone with the self doesn't equate to loneliness, but it can bring up patterns of loneliness and conditioning. One must be strong and powerful to transcend this temporary state.

Friends, it IS necessary as Christians to pray every day, seeking in GRACE and praise to discover God's will on a daily basis.

Sometimes when we are called to do things we think we cannot do, we become undone. We perceive ourselves as "damaged goods." Anyone know anyone who is not damaged in some way? Our damage gives us the credentials to help others. This, my friends, is where God's Grace is our salvation. It will not fail us. It is important to be driven to the edge, and that moment is where we find the strength to be open to the truth. Prayers of the heart are the most authentic path to knowing the truth. In times when there is great assault on the mind, Grace must be firm within us. Remember this, above all: Jesus still loves us. We are His beloved.

Life unfolds as it should; we cannot force it. Sometimes the lower we sink, the higher we rise again. We can trust that even in circumstances deemed unimaginable comes wisdom thru God's Grace. Recall Bruce's message, "The Grace of Point Zero."

Let us pray:

Divine Spirit, your Grace is our salvation. Remove the veil from our eyes, the suffocation of our hearts, and the gripping vice from our minds. Replace these with your undying love and the sweetness of your presence, and may the joy of these gifts you bestow upon us give us full power blessings. With great gratitude and love. Amen.

Benediction~

May the Grace and Love of our Lord be your comforting truth. Go and live life with hearts filled with the blessings of love, joy, wisdom, and freedom.