

Message: “Hold the Wheel and Drive”, presented by Guest Speaker Rob Hamilton on 09-17-2017 at Crossroads United Methodist Church, Waunakee, WI.

Matthew Ch. 28, Verses 16-20

Jesus appoints his 11 disciples to go to Galilee at a date and time both prior to his death and after his resurrection. It is believed that approximately 500 other followers were also in attendance at Galilee. In Matthew 28:16-20, Paul describes that some of the original followers of Christ doubted Him at first. Here, Jesus does not reject the doubters but comes closer to his 11 disciples and delivers the great charter for his kingdom in the world.

Matthew Ch. 28, Verses 16-20 Reads:

Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted! Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Ecclesiastes 4:13

Solomon was a king and therefore was allowed to speak more freely than another concerning the vanity of kingly state and dignity. In Ecclesiastes 4:13, Solomon believes one who may be young and poor in the world, and without having been noticed, may be more worthy of respect than one who is unwilling to be advised by others.

Ecclesiastes Ch. 4, Verse 13 Reads:

“Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who knoweth not how to receive admonition anymore.”

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First, play Drive, by Incubus: [On the Message page, click “Watch” to view the video.]

Please listen to the lyrics in this song and really hear the words. Or follow along with the lyrics on the screen, not just to read but to understand.

This song has a special place in my heart. I had a choice early in my adulthood to either stay in Madison or to return back to where I grew up in Rochester, NY. I chose to stay, and after that decision, my first job was as the Operations Manager for the East Side Best Buy. This song was newly released and played over the musak system throughout our store. It became so popular that the Home Audio and Car Audio departments incorporated it into their walk-up displays – the one where people could press a button to hear it through different home theaters or car stereos...Well, needless to say, the general public and ALL of the store’s employees got sick of hearing it day in and day out.

Not me though...And I still love it! In an odd way it reminded me of home and took me back to when I first learned how to drive. Do you remember getting your Driver’s License? I was in my mom’s 1988 Ford Tempo, a slate gray 4-door sedan. It was a really nice car for a 16 year old in spring of 1991 to take a driver’s test on, except the gas pedal stuck. I knew it did, and I was used to it driving around with one of my parents on my learners permit. So when the driving test came, I was knew how to handle the situation if it began to stick.

Sure enough, here I was, 5 minutes into the test and the engine was revving – The examiner had gotten in and we had pulled away from the curb. The examiner directed me to the test location a block down from where we started. It was in that instance that I realized – I was going to have to ride the break through the WHOLE test. I am driving through the city streets, cautious not to exceed the speed limit, and tapping the breaks to maintain a steady speed of 25 mph. To which, out of the blue, the examiner states, “you know you can speed up here.” HUH..?!?!? Wait, what?!? I can speed up?!? I was actually told I was driving too SLOWLY! So, I’m like, “What’s the speed limit here...Isn’t it 25 here? Any unposted road in the city is 25, right?” To which he replies, “Well, I can’t tell you, but I can say you are not exceeding it.” “You can speed up here.” That resonates with me today. Little did I know that at that time in my life that this was a pre-cursor for what adulthood was to be like. My whole goal for my life following that day was to a) get driver’s license and b) cruise with friends. Now, this guy wanted me to “speed up here.”

MATTHEW 28:16-20 The Great Commission

I didn’t have a care in the world other than to get my license because that equaled Freedom. It equaled the ability to make new friends and keep the old; one is silver and the other gold! And isn’t that what God wants us to do in Matthew 28:16-20? Our mission is to Go, make new disciples of Jesus Christ to transform lives to transform the world. We connect the disconnected, ignite hearts for Jesus Christ and transform lives to transform the world. The first step is to Connect. Connect with our friends, connect with others, connect with individuals at every minute of the day and in a manner that makes God proud. But I ask you – How often do we truly do that? We may give a cursory “Hello” and possibly a “Hey, how’s it going today?” or maybe even a “I saw blah-blah issue on Facebook. Is everything OK? I’ll pray for you.”

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That seems great, right? I mean, you're at least doing something – but why don't we do more? Is it because we are scared? Afraid of what we might look like to others; who might be offended? We often connect within our safe zone – with people we know or are within our inner circle, but how often do we “Take Chances”? Kristen spoke about this message a few months ago. And it resonated with me that I need to step outside of my comfort zone – why? – because that is what God wants from me. That is why I am here today. I haven't done this before, but I was called to! And I made it a priority over all the other things going on in my life. Lisa asked me on Friday, “Are you anxious? Scared? Nervous?” My answer was, “I'm Excited”. Matthew, 28:16-20 describes that “some doubted” when Christ appeared to them in Gallilee. It also describes that “then Jesus came to them...” He came to them – most likely with open arms and open eyes – and he did not shy away from them. We should not be scared to take chances or reach beyond our comfort zones. Why? Because Christ will be there! As disciples, he comes to US!

Are there other factors that do not allow us to do this, or is it that we allow other factors to drive us – other “PRIORITIES” rather than pleasing God? Maybe we do not connect because we need to “speed up here” to deal with the daily responsibilities and demands of work, family, kids, activities etc. and don't take the time to truly connect – to build deep relationships with people around us? God wants us to connect with those that we interact with to “go make disciples”...There aren't any caveats that say “go make disciples when it is most convenient for you...” or “go make disciples when the timing is right...”

Have we steered into the fast lane and veered away from our once youthful exuberance?

ECCLESIASTES 4:13 in today's scripture leads us to being open and willing to hear others. We can't do that if we are set in our ways and in the “fast lane” of life. So, what is the alternative?

PROVERBS 22:6 says “Start children off on the way they should go and they will not go from it.”

MATTHEW 18:3-4 says “...unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

The alternative is to be a Child of God. Think of a relationship you have with a child – It could be your son or daughter, grandson, granddaughter, niece, nephew, cousin, friend's child, whomever – What comes to your mind? A smile that comes just from a quick glance or a game of peek-a-boo? A laugh or giggle from chasing each other across the living room or around the house? The endless energy you wish you could bottle up but that you see in them on a daily basis? Maybe it is what you see in your kids that you remember doing as a kid; or maybe it is a simple hug that comes when you least expect it. This is what God wants us to be – Childlike. We need to embrace our lives, and all others around us like we embrace our children and with the same youthful spirit as God wants – With open arms and open eyes!

Maybe it isn't the connect part that we struggle with. It may be the Ignite part of “Go and Make...” You think about the car ignition that you have to either insert the key or push that “Start” button to Ignite that engine. I often think that is what God does to us but only as much as we allow him to. We may be moved by a message here at CUMC, or by an external event that speaks to our hearts, but I believe God wants us to Ignite and grow that spark or flame burning inside us into a great conflagration! John the Baptist speaks of this in Matthew 3:11 where he states “...But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

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HAVE YOU NOT BEEN BAPTIZED? IF SO, YOU HAVE THE FIRE WITHIN YOU – GO IGNITE! When we go camping as a family, I love building morning campfires from the leftover embers of the night before. It’s always my goal when camping to only use one match AT MOST. I’ll even look for warm embers from the previous campers before starting our own fire. I’ve gotten Lucas into this too, and so we sometimes battle over who gets to do this...Once the fire is started, I want to keep it ignited all weekend. I keep stoking it and blowing into the coals to fan the flames. I usually need to collect smaller pieces of kindling first, but after a while I am adding big logs onto a hot fire! This is “Go and Make..” GO IGNITE THAT FIRE THROUGH THE SMALLEST EMBER! Keep igniting and fueling that fire! Speak the word of the Lord as you would blow into a campfire to fan that flame and volunteer for our Ignite ministries. Add wood to the fire through expanding your connections through our Connect ministries.

You do these things and suddenly a Transformation will occur – within you and with those around you that you have truly connected and ignited! Our CUMC Tailgate event did that for me. I don’t think anyone saw the connections that occurred coming – I know I didn’t! – GOD IS GOOD! I saw the response and am energized! I am transformed! What we are doing here is working! That flame in me is not just ignited – it is stoked! We are tasked to not rest but to “go and make new disciples of all nations...” We are tasked to continually connect with those we have touched and ignite their hearts, transforming lives to transform the world. I task you to Transform yourself – Volunteer, sponsor an idea, get up here and speak, Join a Growth Group. Heck, LEAD A GROWTH GROUP!

After I completed the driving test, I parked back to the spot we had started from, thinking I had done everything right but was going to fail on a technicality. The delay in the examiner’s first comment seemed to be an eternity so I pushed the subject, and was pretty blunt – we are talking about being in New York here - “So, what was the speed limit back there, now that were done...” I ask. At this point, I’m hoping he doesn’t state – why does it matter, kid, you failed it anyway... Thankfully, he states, “It was actually 30 mph. You are correct about the unposted roads, but you missed the 30 mph sign. Everything else was really good. Congratulations!” PHEW!!!

Connect – Ignite – Transform...This is what God commands of us. Don’t be fearful of this task. Embrace it – head on and fearless! Hold the wheel and Drive with God as your co-pilot. He is there with open arms and open eyes! He has the roadmap and will direct us on the long and winding road that is life. Act with passion and grace and inhibition – Stick your head out the window and let the wind blow through your hair. Do it all with a childlike exuberance and energy that NEVER quits! Be a child with me! Be a child of God!