

Luke 9:51-56

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set towards Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But he turned and rebuked them. Then they went on to another village.

I Peter 4:7-11

The end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

“The Time is Now to Build Our Bookcase”**Rev. David Dalke****July 27, 2008**

It was the senior year of college, and it was the last semester, and I thought, “I’m going to take a class that I know absolutely nothing about. It wouldn’t have been the first time that would have happened to me in college, but I thought, “This one, I know nothing about.” And I took woodworking. And I decided that I would build a bookcase, and so I consulted with Professor Hubert Weebe, an old Mennonite gentleman who was the professor of woodworking, and I said, “What wood should I get?” He said, “You ought to take birdseye maple.” I found out later it’s one of the most difficult pieces of wood you can work with. So I said, “Now what do I do?” He said, “You have to make plans to build your bookcase, and then you can build it. But make plans.”

So I started making my plans, anxiously, and I made plans, and I drew my plans, and I tore them up, and I drew some more. And I colored them, and I drew some more. And I drew plans for, I bet, half a semester. And finally Professor Weebe came over to me and he said, “David?” I said, “Yes, Professor Weebe.” “What are you doing?” And I said, “I am making plans for my bookcase.” And he said, “Look around, and tell me what you see. Look around, and tell me what you see.” And I looked around, and there was Gary over there, and Gary was shellacking his table. And then I looked over there, and there was Mary. Mary was at the lathe, and she was just finishing the base of her lamp. And there was Jim. Jim was over there, and he was sanding his table. Professor Weebe said, “And David, what are you doing?” And I said, “I am making plans for my bookcase.” And he looked at me and said, “David, when do you think you will ever build your bookcase?”

Well you know, there were a group of nine people that had something in this congregation, and not too long ago, they made plans for a couple months, and then they

built their bookcase of adventure. A bookcase of adventure. Burl and Janet and Lorraine and Warner and Mel and Maxine and Mary and Rita and Sally, they all had one thing in common here. They built a bookcase, but they're all seniors in this congregation. And you know what they did? Their bookcase that they built was that they decided and made plans to go to the Boulder College of Massage Therapy, so they could have students work on the muscles of their body. Now, that's pretty cool, especially when you figure that you add up all their ages together, and it comes to 780 years, and if you put Gretchen Bennett in that mix, who drove the van, and if you put me in their, who also drove a car, it comes to 918 years. And we went to the Boulder College of Massage Therapy. They built their book case.

Janet rode with me. Janet's 96, and we were in the car, and she proceeded to tell me about all the ministers she had known through the years in this church since 1919, very complimentary I might add, to the clergy here in this church, and she talked a little bit about how she lived down on College Avenue, walked many blocks to the church for meetings every day, and then she got quiet. She hadn't been feeling very well, and she thought a massage would do her good, and that's why she came. But she got real quiet, so I got quiet, and then pretty soon she looked up and said, "I like football." And I said, "Well, Janet, I like football too," and she said. "I never miss a game." I said, "That's wonderful," and she went on to tell me why CSU hadn't done very well over the past few years, what Sonny could have done differently, and what she hoped Steve Fairchild would do this year to make this team function a little bit better, and I thought, "I'm going to call the athletic director and say, "I have somebody you need on your staff, and if you don't want her, I'm going to suggest to Steve Fairchild she just kind of be there and shadow things, and be this consultant of strategy, because she knew a lot. We had a great visit. Those seniors built their bookcase of adventure. They didn't just make plans, they carried them out. Professor Weebe would have been proud. He would have been proud of them.

And remember old Aunt Eula we talked about here one time, when she died, remember? The best compliment given her was, she never had to say "I wish I would have..." "I wish I would have..." Because she made plans too, and carried them out. We miss so much. It feels good to make plans, but we miss so much when we don't carry them out. The bookcase of adventure.

Now, there's another bookcase that I've been thinking about. I've been thinking about this bookcase for a long, long time. It's called, for me, the Bookcase of Tolerance and Compassion. Tolerance and compassion. I mean, I've been building that bookcase for years, because there are people out here and out there that don't think like I do, they don't believe the way I believe, they don't talk like I do, they don't drive like I do. They don't make decisions the way I make them. I've been working on that bookcase for a long time, making my plans for tolerance and compassion. You know, there are few things more exciting than a high school graduation, especially if it's your daughter or your son, or your granddaughter or, in our case, a grandson. Our oldest grandson just recently graduated from high school in Simpsonville, South Carolina, and we went. Just a few weeks ago we got on a plane on a Wednesday morning at 9:00. The graduation was 24

hours later on a Thursday morning at 9:00 in Simpsonville, South Carolina, and we got on that plane and we went to Chicago, and they had had some weather-related issues the day before, and we got to Chicago and went to see where our little shuttle plane would take us to Simpsonville, and the sign said "Delayed." So I called Julie and said, "It may not be 5:00, it may be more like 6:00 when we get in." She said "Not to worry." And so pretty soon we looked up again and it said more delay, and now it was going to be "Julie, it looks like 7:00, not 6:00." And then the third time another delay, and finally, "Cancelled." Cancelled, last flight out. The last flight out to Simpsonville, South Carolina.

Now, remember we talked about one time, that we can't control what other people say, think, feel or do, but we can control our response to what they say, think, feel or do. And I sort of changed that, that I can't control what an airline says, thinks, I don't know what they feel, or maybe what they do, but I've got to control my response to that. You know, tolerance, compassion. Sheryl and I started to talk, "What are our options?" and all of a sudden an agent called us over and said, "I can put you on a plane at quarter till ten tonight, and it'll take you to Dulles Airport in Washington DC. And then at 11:30 tonight, you can fly to Simpsonville, South Carolina." And we said, "Do it." Because it was the only way to get there. And so we got on that plane, and we arrived, and we ran to our gate for an 11:30 departure, and there were the pilot standing there and a few other people that were scrambling around like ourselves, and pretty soon a pilot took that PA system mike off the wall and he says, "Folks, you can tell we're the pilots, and we're ready to go. The plane is fueled, it's got fuel, but there's a problem. We don't have a flight attendant. We don't have a flight attendant, and we can't fly without a flight attendant." We all volunteered to be the flight attendant. They said, "No, we have to have a flight attendant, and she's coming in from Richmond, Virginia." We're in Washington DC, not too far. He said, "We should be on the way as soon as she gets here."

Now you know we read, this morning, about Peter. Jesus named him as the rock. Peter was the rock, he was solid in most ways. And he said to these people, a few years after Jesus' death, these were the disenfranchised Jewish Christians in Asia Minor that he was talking to and he said, "I want to tell you, you're going to run up against people that aren't going to like you, and that you're not going to like very much, and you're going to have to love those people. You need to be compassionate, and you need to be tolerant to people that you don't want to be compassionate and tolerant with." He said, "That's what you've got to do." And all of a sudden, 11:30 turned into 12:00 and 12:00 into 12:30, and 12:30 into 1:00, and 1:00 into 1:30, and 2:00 into 2:30 and the flight attendant ambled through the crowd, and we gave her feeble applause. And she said, "We'll be on the way soon." And we got on that plane and took that little shuttle plane out there, and we're sitting there, the motors are running, and all of a sudden, the motors stop. 2:30 in the morning, almost 3:00, the motors stop. And the pilot says, "Folks, I don't know what's going on." But he said, "You know, while we've been waiting all this time, the baggage handlers did not load your bags. So, you know what? We got to wait for the bags."

As I'm looking out the window at these sleepy baggage handlers, just meandering out there, loading them on the plane, slow motion, I started thinking, "Jesus went into the

mountain to pray. One of the things he said to his disciples was, "I want you to stay awake, because," he said, "I've got to go pray about my life and my death. I want to get this cup to pass from me. I don't want to die." And he said, "I may need you. I may need to come and talk to you. Stay awake for me." And he prayed and he prayed and he prayed, and finally he came back, and the disciples were sound asleep. Sound asleep. And he said to them, "Couldn't you have stayed awake one hour for me? I was in crisis. Life or death." And I wanted to shout out that door of that plane, to those baggage handlers, "Couldn't you have stayed awake at least one hour, for all of us? We need to get to Simpsonville, South Carolina." And the plane moved down near the runway. And all of a sudden, the pilot came back on and he said, "Folks, I think I'm out of excuses, but this evening we've been a long time trying to get off the ground," and he said, "Do you know what? The computers are shut down, and our flight plan has been lost, and so we're going to do it the old-fashioned way. The tower is going to radio our flight plan, we're going to write it down, and then we'll be on the way. At least another fifteen minutes."

Another call to Julie, middle of the night. Middle of the night. "Sorry, Julie, looks like it's going to be closer to 4:30 or 5:00, now, in the morning. Sorry." She said, "Not to worry." And pretty soon we waited and we waited and waited, and then I'm thinking, "What is going on with the flight plan? Why are we not hearing?" And then I start thinking about, you know the Dalai Lama, a man of tolerance and compassion. Recently a group of people met at his home in India. They came there to talk about peace, inner peace and world peace. These were forty people that gathered at his home India. He's in India because he got, you know he had to move away from his home in Tibet because the Chinese government took it over, and his homeland, so now he's in India, and those people are all meeting, they're theologians, they're philosophers, they're teachers, they're medical people, and they're all talking about peace. And one day they meet with the Dalai Lama and they say to him, "We think, since you got moved out of your homeland, out of your homeland in Tibet by the Chinese government, we think that we ought to out an embargo on China. We shouldn't trade with them, we shouldn't visit their country, we shouldn't associate with them at all. Because look what happened to you." And he looked at those people that were meeting with him and he said, "You can do that if you want. You can put an embargo on China." And then he said, "But if you do, it will harm China." Compassion. Tolerance.

Yeah, Professor Weebe, I'm working on that. I'm trying to build that bookcase. I'm making my plans. And we moved out there near the runway, again, sitting there, and all of a sudden the pilot comes on and he says, "Folks, we're not going. We're not going to go. We can't because it's been too long and my copilot is timed out. He doesn't have any more hours. He can't fly legally, and I need him, so we're taking you back to the gate. Your destination is where we left, Dulles Airport, Washington DC." And as we were taxiing back towards out gate, I started thinking about that Scripture that we read this morning, that Scripture in Luke where Jesus is moving toward Jerusalem, and he has James and John with him, and he has to go through the Samaritan village, and they didn't want him to go through that Samaritan village. And so Jesus said, "Go up ahead, pave the way for us, so we don't have to skirt way around it." James and John came back and said, "Jesus, they won't let us go through their village." And then they said, "Do you know

what?" They were so angry, James and John were so angry, they said, "What we think ought to happen is, we ought to pray for the fires of heaven to come down and destroy that village." And I have to admit, I had sort of thought about that a little bit, as we were taxiing back to the ramp. And Jesus looked at them and rebuked them. He chastised his disciples. He said, "We don't do that. We need to be tolerant, and we need to be compassionate. We need to be tolerant and compassionate."

We stood at the gate, got out, went to the counter, and an agent said, "There are no more flights today. No more. Late afternoon, maybe." He said, "I'm sorry, but all the planes, we backed them up, the flights are full." And then he said, "But you know what? There is one flight. At 9:30 this morning, and it's on US Airways. It's a different airplane, different company, and I can get you on that." And I said, "Book it. Put us on it." He said, "That'll get you to Simpsonville, South Carolina." And he gave me the tickets and I said "Thank you" and started to walk away, and I said "By the way, where's the gate," and he said, "Oh, I forgot to tell you, US Airways doesn't fly out of Washington-Dulles, they fly out of Reagan International. It's 45 minutes across town. You'll have to take a taxicab over there." And I said, "45 minutes?" He said, "Yeah." We got in it and I remember riding in that cab across town, it's 5 a.m.. The sun is coming up, it's sort of playing its melodic sounds of rays bouncing off the capitol of the United States, and we saw the Washington Monument as it got graced with the sunshine, and the pounding of the tires just sounded like the rhythm of the percussion section in a band. 45 minutes, we finally got there, and we got on that plane at 9:30 and we went off to Simpsonville, South Carolina with the sounds of "Pomp and Circumstance" only a fantasy as they rang in our heads.

You know, Jesus made a lot of plans and he built a lot of bookcases. He built lots of them. He grew up in a carpenter shop. He built benches, he built tables, chairs, and he made plans to do that, and then he made plans to build his bookcase of adventure. He walked along that seaside and gathered those disciples, he sat at people's tables and ate, he turned the water into wine. He was an adventurous soul and he made his plans. He made his plans to build his bookcase of tolerance, where he sat in temples and he sat in people's homes, talking about the differences they had in their religions and their approach to God. He made it in tolerance, and he also made a bookcase of compassion. The ultimate compassion on the cross, with nails in his hands and his feet, and he says, "God forgive them, they don't know what they're doing." The ultimate bookcase of compassion.

"So David, what are you and all those people out there this morning doing?" "Well, Professor Weebe, we're making plans. Yeah, we're making plans to build our bookcases of adventure and tolerance and compassion." Well, look around. Look around, all of you, and tell me, what do you see?