

SERMON

Not Made by Human Hands

2 Cor 5:1 “Not made by human hands, but by the Hands of God.”

Expect the unexpected!

I once wrote a 40-page sermon. No worries for today. I ripped that sermon up many years ago. I realized it said nothing God wanted me to say.

I had been comparing the similarities of nonviolent love and actions of 3 men who transformed their communities: Thomas Merton, Martin Luther King Jr, and Mahatma Gandhi. The sermon was very scholarly. It took a long time to write. It was exceedingly mindful, but it had no heart.

Mahatma means “Great Heart” and Merton and Martin adopted great hearts for God and people too.

So, when a sermon (or action) has no heart – no matter how long or logical it is – you rip it up! You mourn and humble yourself and then emptied of your own thoughts and desires you turn to God (the greatest Heart of all). You ask, “What Lord, would you have me say (or do)?”

When you ask God for direction, be prepared to hear the unexpected answer. Then, trust and obey his answer. It will be revealed in your heart, mind, and soul.

The Great Heart sermon was being prepared in the middle of summer and God’s unexpected answer to my prayer was “Watch the Christmas movie – A Wonderful Life”. In the middle of summer!

Pretty weird, right? Yet, the answer was very strong and persistent.

So, I watched the movie and I saw the heart of the sermon message. The message that God wanted me to share. The sermon title was rewritten to be “Merton, Martin, Mahatma and the True Meaning of Christmas”.

The heart of the sermon was revealed to be... that through the power of being immersed and walking in God’s love together ... we are given what we are truly meant to have. We are given new life. A life of love with each other in Him the greatest lover of all.

Psalms 138 reminds us that we will never be abandoned by God. We can make a total mess of our lives or become weak and powerless due to sickness or age, but he is still there working His purpose in our lives. Verse 8 says, “The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me, your love, O Lord endures forever. Do not abandon the works of your hands.”

And God is faithful. He does not abandon us, and He continues to work to fulfill His purpose for each of us.

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In Corinthians 5:1, we read God’s reassurance for our earthly life and our eternal life after death. He promises to “inwardly renew us day by day” and create for us “an eternal house (body) not made by human hands, but by His great loving heart.”

What does this “individual purpose” and “eternal body” look like? What forms are being molded and brought to eternal life through God’s loving and powerful hands?

It’s a family. God’s family! God is making us into a family where each of us is truly special, needed and loved.

Mark 3:35 says, “Whoever does God’s will is my brother, and sister and mother.” Jesus wasn’t rejecting His blood family but revealing that through His heavenly Father a greater family was being formed as we follow God’s will together.

These are great gifts God offers:

- Becoming the person God meant for us to be (unique, special, and loved)
- Coming home to a family where we are honored, cherished, and belong.

The gifts are offered as we follow God’s will together.

As we follow God’s will together...

Again, just like God’s answers to prayer, we need to expect the unexpected as we follow God’s will together!

Did you ever watch a butterfly work its way out of its cocoon? Or watch a baby bird peck its way out of its eggshell? It is a long, hard work, but it is needed for new life to emerge and thrive.

Following God’s will is very similar. Working together on a purpose God has set before us will sometimes be long and hard. Many times ,it’s discouraging or confusing, but staying the course brings joys and delights during the journey and great and eternal gifts at the end of the journeys.

You can be scared, but also be courageous.

I turned 65 this past May, and now that I’m a “wise” senior citizen I have taken the time to look back at the times I followed God’s will together with others. I see God’s promises fulfilled in those past journeys.

Those journeys with people who were total strangers at first (on mission trips, in Sunday School, at church camp, singing with the choir, and serving community meals) all these

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people are now family members who love and cherish each other in His love, even though we may never see each other again until we enter our eternal life.

And you want to know something else? Even when a person turns 65, 75, 85 (or whatever age) the journey with God and His promises continues!

You need to still “expect the unexpected”.

I’m starting a new journey with a friend that is closer than a brother to me and once again God’s promises are being renewed and fulfilled.

God is good.

Even though following His will may be long and hard (and scary sometimes) take courage my friends in Christ. Trust and obey and follow Him together. He will be with you every step of the way: loving, encouraging you, providing you with His grace and delights, and waiting to welcome you home with arms wide open to His Great Family of love now and forever more.

And all God’s people say...

AMEN