

“Get Your Exercise”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

First Sunday After Pentecost

June 15, 2014

The epistle lesson for today is taken from the second book of Corinthians, chapter 5, verses 6 through 10 and 14 through 17. I'll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! This is God's word for God's people. Thanks be to God. God bless the reading, hearing, and understanding of your word today. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Mark Twain said, “When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.” Most people

will agree, as we get older our thinking changes about how we view others. And almost everyone would agree, Fathers *are* a vital asset to the family unit.

Some of us may not appreciate or understand the importance of fathers until they're no longer around. But God's love continues to fill in the empty spaces our fathers left behind or never did fill in. We're shaped by our relationship with our father or our lack of it. If your relationship with your father was missing you undoubtedly see a great need for a close and intimate relationship with God, and God the Father is also God our Mother. God is all things to us and can't be limited through the English language's lack of pronouns to describe our Lord.

Some of us here today spend years to redefine what the word father actually means to us. We have trouble understanding that our Earthly father is not like our Heavenly Father. We have to undo what was done and rethink who God is—because our definition and feelings about our earthly father influence greatly the way we get our spiritual exercise. Christian's need their spiritual exercise.

How do *you* walk by faith? When life is good and things move along well . . . is this when you feel close to God? Or what about this angle—when life takes a turn for the worse and challenging circumstances weigh you down, do you become distant to God? Do you wonder where God is in this big mess? Sometimes we feel we've got to handle all the challenges and problems on our own. People can feel pretty self-sufficient, but fact is, we don't need to take on the burden when the burden can be the Lords.

Listen to verse 6 again. “So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.” The Apostle Paul tells us we're at home in the body, and why wouldn't we be? We spend more time with ourselves than anyone else! Our bodies are a great part of us, and when we *do* have to part with our bodies we don't want to! In fact, our bodies are so

important to us and to the Lord that this is the place God chose to reside with us, to live in us, and to help us walk through our spiritual journey.

When we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior, God's Spirit immediately takes up residence in our bodies. So, we feel at home. But when things in life don't go as we want them to go, how do we walk? How do we get our spiritual exercise? God calls us to "Walk by faith, not by sight." Walking by faith and not going by what we see with our physical eye means we walk with God. We don't have a pillar of cloud or fire to guide us as Israel had.

Paul would have us get our spiritual exercise as one who has confidence in the Lord—to have strong courage in the face of difficult circumstances. To believe and trust God despite what we see with our physical eyes. When Jesus was ascending into the heavens 50 days after his resurrection this is what he said. "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." We can't see Christ, but his promise is that he's there and that takes faith. So we have an exercise companion. He's a work-out buddy so to speak and one whom we can exercise our faith toward. One who goes with us and helps us to believe and trust.

Abraham was called by God to go to a country far away. He left his family and started journeying. He was a man of great courage and faith and walked by faith and not by sight. Sometimes in our spiritual journey when we're exercising our faith muscles to the full extent we may feel like we're walking in the dark. We may have only enough light for the day. That's usually the case. We only see a part of the distance we're supposed to travel. It's like looking in a mirror after we've just come out of the shower with the door closed and no fan on—it's foggy and cloudy. But we journey on trusting the Lord.

And we can only trust the Lord because of God's great love through the work of Christ on Calvary. The love of Christ—it urges us on to continue in faith. Our responsibility is to die to our doubt and our self-sufficiency. As we journey

along our path through life we begin to understand the things of God by faith more and more; this is our spiritual exercise. We trust more and pray more.

Fathers trust in the Lord. Bring your families to church regularly. Pray. Read the Bible. We believe you're strong and have courage, but be strong in the Lord. Get your spiritual exercise through trusting the Lord and walking by faith. Have family devotions. Pray together. You don't have to carry all those burdens alone. Share your burdens and feelings with God and know that God walks with you and leads you as you care for your families. Get your spiritual exercise. Stay in shape spiritually and know that God walks along side of you. No father needs to walk alone.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, touch and bless every father here today. Most fathers feel they have neglected their family in some way. They are so much more than someone who brings home some bacon. We pray God for you to strengthen them, brace them up, provide more courage, and let them know that you alone Lord empower and enable them to become who they were always intended to become. Pour out your blessing here today, and bless these men here today through the Holy Spirit who resides in their hearts. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.