

Umpteen Reasons to Walk Your Talk

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Sunday, October 23, 2011

When I came up with my sermon title for this morning, “Umpteen Reasons to Walk Your Talk,” I had in mind all kinds of reasons why it is helpful to live what you say you believe. I was thinking of truth and integrity and freedom trustworthiness and believability and honor and respect and on and on and on.....all kinds of good things. But, truth is, all the reasons I could think up added up to one really important reason. When you walk your talk, you have peace.

So it's peace I want to lift up this morning: what it looks like and how to get some. *Walking your talk* is just a phrase, but you know it when you see it. You know when you encounter persons who are at peace. They have no hidden agendas. No chip on the shoulder. They do not “people please.” You don't “cross” them casually. Yet, there is something in their eyes. A light. A glow. A capacity, perhaps, for laughter and tenderness. In their presence you want to breathe a sigh of relief as you realize that you feel safe.

That's how it is with Paul's letter to the Thessalonians this morning. Paul's peace is tangible. He has come through hard, hard times. He's a tough old bird. Yet he is not sour or bitter. Tenderness flows throughout his letter. Some of you may remember an old Frank Perdue chicken ad that said, “It takes a tough man to make a tender chicken.” Well, it takes a tough man to write a tender letter like we heard this morning. A man who is at peace. A man who knows innocence in a bitter and disappointed world.

Paul offers a way to your own peace. Imagine with me for a moment a peace that is both tough and tender. This peace is yours! Think of living your life today at peace. Remember that peace is not avoiding conflict or trying to please anyone. Peace comes from knowing that whatever you face, whoever you are, you do not face it alone. You have a real God who will partner with you when you ask.

So let's ask for God's peace right now. I'm not kidding. Let's stop and pray a moment. I'm not talking about a wordy pastoral prayer. I'm not thinking about something in the bulletin we read. I just want to pray with you and let you pray your prayer asking God to partner with you and show you God's own peace for you. This is different. Take your hand and place it over your heart center. Your heart center is a little different from the organ we call our heart. That organ is on the left as I understand it. My doctor checks that one out every now and then and tells me mine's still ticking. I'm glad. But the heart center I am talking about this morning is a little different. It is the place of truth where the compassion and forgiveness of God touch you and, if you allow, shine through you. You'll find it just over your breast bone, just below your throat. Put your hand there, right here. Feel the warmth of that place. Feel its power for just a moment.

Now, I invite you to pray with me. We'll use my words this time. I'm asking you to repeat them after me, phrase by phrase. Let's practice because practice is important. Peace takes practice. Partnering up with God takes practice. Building a relationship with our Source takes practice, and we all get out of practice because the world claims our time and our attention. But let's right now practice asking to partner up with God in our lives. Try this and repeat after me.....

Dear God, you are my source.

I come from you. I come to you now.

I accept your presence in my life right now.

Today I am One with you.

Today I partner up with you.

Today I give you my lacks and my limitations.

Today I give you my false perception that I am in charge.

I say YES to your healing.

I say YES to your abundance.

I say YES to your strength.

Today I see that everyone benefits

When I walk my talk.

Dear God, I come to you.

I walk and talk in peace.

So be it! And Amen.

Now, you've asked. How does it feel? (pause)

Imagine that God has heard you... because He has. When you ask for peace, He always hears. Because peace is your inheritance as His creation. You have it in you to be at peace no matter what has happened in your life in the past, no matter what is happening right now. Peace is completely available. So...What if God means to send you out into your life, waking this talk? What would that look like? What wants to happen today?

The Bible we read from every Sunday is all about ordinary people doing extraordinary things. A bunch of slaves find a home of their own. A shepherd boy becomes a king. Kings come worship at the feet of a child. Fishermen become apostles. A tax collector joyfully gives away everything he has. A prostitute begins to teach about divine love. The wretched of the earth begin to believe they matter. That whatever is in their past, whatever their jobs, their roles, their economic circumstances, they find extraordinary peace and joy in their lives. Why should you be any different?

One final thing this morning. There's no such thing as asking for a little bit of peace! That's like coming to the altar to get married and saying, "I kinda, sorta do." It's like saying, "I want to be a little bit pregnant." It is saying, "OK, God, you can come into my life so far, but no farther."

God hears you when you ask for peace. God asks in return, all of you: your future, your past, everything. God asks that you turn every intention, every opportunity, every crisis over to God and ask God to show you God's peace and your place in it.

I promise this: ask and you will begin to glow. Ask, and facing you, your world will change.

And by this, everyone will see that you walk your talk.

Amen