

One Stone Left Standing

**A sermon given by Rev. Dr. Gregory Young
Presented on Sunday, November 15, 2009
Pledge Sunday**

Sermon prayer:

Let us pray. Gracious God, as our children move to Sunday school with their teachers, we pray for our children. We are grateful for their lives; the gift of their lives, the energy, the excitement, the creativity that they bring to our families and to our church family. We're grateful for those that you've gifted to teach our children. And pray that you will be with their teachers and continue to use their service to strengthen the faith of our young children among us. Lord, bless the children; bless those who care for them – parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles. And bless all that we may come to know you as a God who loves us, even as a parent loves a child. Amen.

Sermon:

One of the things that I enjoy doing - I don't think I would be able to classify it as a true hobby of mine; but one of the things I've enjoyed doing over the years is repairing old pieces of furniture. Now, I have to say I have a lot to learn about repairing old pieces of furniture, but I still give it a shot. And I remember years ago working on an old fashioned treadle sewing machine that my wife had inherited from her grandmother. It sat in our basement for a few years after we were married and serving in the church. I just decided one year that I wanted to surprise Cindy. And I wanted to fix this old treadle sewing machine up because Cindy enjoys sewing and I thought this was something that she actually might enjoy reconnecting with her grandmother through. And so I began the work of stripping off the old finish that had really been marred over the years – and any antique furniture expert will tell you that's the absolute worse thing you can do to a piece of antique furniture; but I just wanted to spruce it up a bit. And I also

began working on the mechanics of the sewing machine, which weren't really in too bad shape, and after quite some time I was able to get this old treadle sewing machine at a point where I could present it to Cindy as a gift with the hope that she might use it.

Well I do remember the look of gratitude on Cindy's face as she saw that old sewing machine come back to life and as she put her foot to the treadle and started pedaling and making the sewing machine work. She may of even tried to sew a little bit on it. All I know is that to this day if Cindy needs to use a sewing machine she goes up to the sewing room and uses the nice electric Singer that I gave her as a wedding gift. The treadle machine that I'd worked on has a place of honor in our living room and has had a place of honor there for a long time reminding us of family that has nurtured and cared for us through the years and as a tribute to Cindy's grandmother and a connection for her.

Everything ages and wears out. Any of the young people that doubt that just speak to some of the older members of our congregation and they'll tell you very quickly they can't do the things now that they used to be able to do when they were young. We slow down as we age. If you're like me your knees give out, arthritis starts to set in - you can't run, you can't kneel. It's a chore for me to kneel at prayer time but I manage that to the grace and glory of God. Time catches up with all of us and with all things.

If you've ever owned a car you know what I am talking about because there comes a point in time in owning a car where you're weighing whether I should spend the money to repair and fix-up an old car or should I put that money toward a down payment on either a new car or a previously owned car – a new to you car. The government in fact helped us to see that a little bit this year with the "cash for clunkers" program that was actually a program to help stimulate people buying cars and helping out the automobile industry. But it also became an opportunity for those who found themselves driving around an old car that was really on its last legs turn it in and get a little bit of money towards the purchase of a new

automobile and it became a real opportunity for many people. Everything wears out, everything wears out.

Jesus could see what was going to happen to the beautiful Temple that stood on Mount Zion; the temple that stood at the very center of the life of God's people, Israel. Even in our story today when Jesus pulls away from Jerusalem and goes over to the Mount of Olives, he sits on that mount opposite Mount Zion and there stood the temple as a symbol of the presence of God in the land. He said to his disciples who were admiring the building of the temple and all that it stood for, he said to them, "Not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down." How could he say such a thing? How could he say such a thing about the temple that stood there as a strong fortress, as a place where God ruled God's people? How could he stand there and say these things about the Temple because it was almost as if he were saying them about God? Did Jesus know that in 70 years the Romans would finally get fed up with occupying Israel and conquer it? Did Jesus know, that just like any building made with human hands the time would come when the people would no longer be able to either afford or have the energy or the vision to continue to maintain a building that's starts to fall apart? Maybe he just knew the natural course of things, especially human made things. He knew because he looked at the Temple, the building of the Temple and saw it for what it was - a creation of human hands. And one that like everything else would one day fall - either from human conflict or from disrepair. Well, everything wears out and fails – almost everything.

I believe what Jesus was helping his disciples to see that day as they gazed upon the beauty and the strength of the Temple was the one thing that does not wear out or fail – and that is God. Throughout his life and in his teachings, everything that Jesus did pointed to the one eternal and lasting thing in all the universe and beyond, and that was God Almighty. As Jesus shared with his followers all of the events that occur over and over again in life – false prophets, wars, kingdoms at odds with other kingdoms, famines, and natural disasters – he pointed to the one reality that remains stable and unchanging and is forever, and that is God.

Today is Pledge Sunday in the life of our congregation. It is the day when we pause as a congregation to remember who we are and to whom it is that we belong. We are part of God's people and we belong now and for all time to God Almighty. We are those who have heard the call of Jesus saying "Follow me" and in our own ways we have said, "Yes, Lord, we will follow." Today with our pledges of tithes and service, we recommit ourselves as a congregation to following the way of Jesus. Our lives of faith are established upon the one Rock that in the end when all else has fallen and have been thrown down; in the end the one Rock that will be left standing – God is our Rock. As we offer to God this day our pledges of tithes, talents and service, we do recommit ourselves to our God and we recommit ourselves to the ministries of this church. As we look to the future we count ourselves among those who choose to build our house of faith on God's everlasting foundation.

And so today, as you prayerfully consider how God is leading you in this moment, on this day to recommit yourself to the ministries of this church, I pray that you will remember the one eternal Rock that was not thrown down and that will never be thrown down or wear out or crumple and that is God our Creator with whom we hope to spend eternity as a community of faith. All thanks and praise be to our God. Amen.