

SERMON: “be the church: good works”

Rev. Geoff Ross: Sunday, May 12th, 2019, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church

[Fitting that we resume our Q&A series – and start our faith in ACT!ON campaign – on Baptism Sunday – as baptism is the gift of the love of God, the grace known in Jesus, but is what is enabled/animated/powered by the Holy Spirit! - Q&A/Recap: The great/Good News of the Gospel – the message that we heard a few weeks ago over Easter: God’s saving plan for us fulfilled by God’s grace in/through Jesus’ death and resurrection in order to redeem/restore us sinless before God so that we might have eternal life – is that God’s grace changes everything! Unearned/unmerited/undeserved, grace is a gift that transforms/renews/remakes us, whole, restored/rebooted to our original image: in brief – God’s saving plan for us was that we were created/redeemed to live a life of faith/lived out in action/good works.]

Today we celebrate Mother’s Day: the day we honour/celebrate the woman who birthed/adopted/chose us – who’ve birthed us in more ways than one; who, by their love/lives/presence/influence, enabled/gave us a life/born to become who we’ve become/meant to be. My mother – Marjorie Ross – was an English Major/MA, she grew up a Minister’s daughter in a very ‘churched’ family, met my Dad at a PYPS event, got married at 25, and had me at 26: we cut our teeth on each other; but she always loved me/found the positive – *[Dyed/blonde-hair/earring: ‘at least it isn’t a brush cut!’]* As her 1st, I made her a ‘mother;’ she made who I am! And while she never ‘talked’ her faith - she ‘walked’ it: then/now! I learned a lot from her – (and my aunt/no children – 12 nieces/nephews) but what I saw her live out was the lesson that a faith lived is a faith in action.

Psychologists/Studies show that we imitate our parents – daughter/mothers, sons/fathers – good/bad:everything from mannerisms/tics/behaviour/sayings/style (yes, you are becoming your mother!) Also learned patterns/habits:generosity/kindness/faith – praying/going to Church/volunteering – putting faith into action. Our parents/mothers give us the DNA to be who God means for us to be – they provide the nature/nurture to help us grow into that person: we are the sum total of who came before us – we are because of them/what they do/did. This isn’t a bad thing – it actually moves us to want to be better – to imitate them by responding to the love we’ve received, showing our love and gratitude by living them out in/through our lives/actions.

[Psalm 139:God knows/formed/provided/foretold everything about our lives – before we were born/womb... # of days/hairs:we are “fearfully and wonderfully made”/nothing is hidden/secret from God/God’s book. It ends with this: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts... and lead me in the way everlasting.” God wants us to be the best of ourselves.]

I often tell people that we are all children of God – known/loved/honoured/esteemed – that God had/has a plan for each of us. Peter, in his letter/our reading, tells those who are saved they are “God’s chosen and special people – Royal priests and a holy nation:

once nobodies; now, God's people" – all in/through the saving work of Jesus Christ; a work that begins the process of transforming/changing/developing us/our faith/lives/behaviour/actions. These are the "*wonderful things that he has done*" and the "*good things*" others see us do: God's DNA is in us to do/be who/what God created us to do/be. And the way we show our love for God is to live out God's expectations. Seen this way, the "*good things*" aren't deeds done for their own sake – they're not about/for us; they're signs of our gratitude for the love/life/purpose given to us.

[Every mother wants a better life for their children: Be good/do good/Nice Boy/Smile at people in the hallways of life – so does God: it's in us to do it.]

Speaking to the early Church, Peter tells them/us that, yes, we are saved by God's grace – but that that should prompt us to live lives of righteousness – not for ourselves, but for the One who 'bought'/brought us out of slavery/death. This is a cause for celebration! God's love/grace – through Jesus/Holy Spirit – reveals itself/bears fruit in/through us/our acts of service. An Easter faith is lived out/manifested in obedient/loving good works of selfless service to one's neighbours and God – as we seek to be/love/serve like Jesus. And – as an Easter people, a chosen people/saved/loved/called by God to be Holy – as we begin our 2019 faith in ACT!ON campaign; this is what it means to be the Church: that our lives/faith in action/good works are to the glory of God. Amen.