**October 31, 2021 Acts 1:6-14 2:17**

***Navigating the Gap***

**Scripture:** *Acts 1:6-14 NRSV*

*(6)So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" (7)He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. (8)But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (9)When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. (10)While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. (11)They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." (12)Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. (13)When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. (14)All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.*

*Acts 2:17 NRSV*

*(17)'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.*

**Notes:**

1. Peter's fishing trip was a time to ***reset*** his thinking.
   1. There is a ***tension*** between what God is calling us to, and what we feel capable of.
   2. In that tension are our defaults, what we are ***comfortable*** with and know we are able to do.
2. We need the Holy Spirit to help us ***achieve*** the things we are called to do.
   1. Sanctifying grace is knowing we are ***not*** ***able*** to achieve what the Lord asks of us on our own; but by following His way, His truth, and His life, we ***are*** ***able*** to do what he asks.
   2. God’s sanctifying grace is a ***profound*** ***gift*** from God.
3. What we do in the ***gap*** matters.
   1. We must come to terms with the ***past***.
   2. We must come to terms with the ***present***.
   3. We must come to terms with our ***future***.
4. Navigating the ***gap*** can be a confusing and difficult place.
   1. The gap is a place of radical consecration; we ***surrender*** our lives, our will, to the Lord.
   2. The costly work of ***sacrifice*** and ***self***-***denial*** is done in the gap.
   3. The gap sets the ***stage*** for some of the deepest work of the Spirit in our lives.

**Script:**

Most of you know that my birthday is October 13, 1963. But if you know my deepest thoughts you will also know that I have two birthdays and the second is the day that I was born again. It is the day that I gave my life to Christ and never tried to take it back. It was His, I gave it to him, and I knew that once I had given it to him, I should not ask for it back. This was the beginning of my Christian walk; but as I have said for the past few weeks, our spiritual walk begins long before that; it begins when the Lord begins to extend his prevenient grace to us, wooing us, calling to us, inviting us, in the hopes that we would choose to accept His invitation to saving grace.

When we accept his saving grace, we begin down a path that requires us to mature in his teachings, allowing Him to transform our life and help us to become more like him; after all, what father does not want his child to act like him. In this process of being transformed to be more like Him, we receive another work of grace, Sanctifying Grace.

As Wesleyans, we believe in the beautiful optimism of grace, otherwise known as sanctification. We believe God can work in the lives of believers through the power of the Holy Spirit in such definitive ways that we are no longer held captive to the residue and baggage of our lives. We are set free to love God with all ourselves and our neighbors as ourselves. Today we proclaim the good news of a heart change while at the same time helping others understand the work, we must do to cultivate the soil of our hearts in preparation of the deep work of the Spirit. There is no magic wand in sanctifying grace. God’s work in us happens as we work with God to name and confess the elements of our past, present, and future that hinder the Journey of Grace. We find our sermon passage in Acts 1:6-14 and 2:17. Join me in the reading of God’s word this day.

Acts 1:6-14 NRSV (6)So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" (7)He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. (8)But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (9)When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. (10)While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. (11)They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." (12)Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. (13)When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. (14)All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

Acts 2:17 NRSV (17)'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams

In our passages today we find a gap, and in that gap, we find the story of the day of Pentecost. We have heard that story a time or two, haven’t we. After the Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples in the upper room, they go out into the streets and begin to prophecy and preach speaking in tongues foreign to them. Those walking in the streets are amazed while others declare that these men must be drunk; but who is drunk at 9:00 in the morning. So Peter stands up and begins to preach;

“(14)Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. (15)Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. (16)No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: (17)'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams….”

Wait a minute. Is this Peter speaking. Isn’t this the same Peter who two months earlier said “I’m going fishing”? Yes, it is and we can find that story in John 21:3 but we will not read it today, but you may want to put your thumb on that page just in case you want to look at it later.

Peter’s fishing trip was not just a weekend get away with some buddies, it wasn’t like deer camp for some of you hunters. Peters fishing trip was a time to reset his thinking, to reset back to his default settings. Everything that is going on is a lot to take in, I need to figure things out, I’ve got to push the default button. There is tension between Peter’s thinking and his calling. Tension between what Peter has been taught growing up and what he is being asked to do. He needs to get away and process all of these things. This story in John 21, is Peter pushing the default button, resetting and realigning his thoughts.

There is a tension for many of us between what we believe God has for us, what God is calling us to do, and what we feel capable of. In that tension are our defaults, what we are comfortable with and know we are able to do. Each of us has deeply embedded assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that, if we aren’t spiritually aware, can show up and subvert the work God wants to do in us and through us.

For Peter the default is fishing, when he is troubled, he goes fishing, when he is worried, he goes fishing, when he needs to relax, he goes fishing. Fishing is the place where Peter is able to think and process his thoughts to make sense. If we look back to John 21; after enduring the agony of betraying Jesus; after the crucifixion and the resurrection that he is not able to bring to grips, Peter has apparently had enough. And, he decides to go fishing and the other disciples decide to go with him.

Fishing is Peters happy place, it is the place where everything makes sense to him, it is his comfort zone, his backup plan, and his reset button. We find Peter here saying that he has had enough, he does not know what to do, so he is going back to what he knows best, and that is fishing. SO how do we go from a man throwing nets into the water from his boat, to this man that we find today standing in the midst of a crowd and boldly preaching to the masses?

After pulling Peter from the fishing boat—yet again—Jesus starts to reveal his plans. These plans are more than the disciples are capable of. They’ve proved that over and over again already. Jesus also understands that their inability won’t hinder them from trying.

They need the promise of the Spirit of God. They need the work of God in their lives to make possible what would be impossible otherwise. They need sanctifying grace. In many ways we are like the disciples, we are not able to do what we are asked by Jesus on our own. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to help us achieve our calling, to do the things we are called to do. Jesus told us that he is the way, by following his example and trusting in the Holy Spirit to supply us the ability to complete the task we hear his words of truth being proved over and over. When we live in the life of Jesus we hear his words of affirmation, we feel his power in our actions and we know that what he says is true and what he asks of us is able to be achieved. This is sanctifying grace; knowing that on our own we are not able to achieve what the Lord asks of us; but by following in His way, believing in His truth, and living in His life, we are able to do whatever he asks of us. Allowing the Holy Spirit to enter into our mind, our heart, our body and our life, allowing Him to have control over our life is what sanctification is all about. God’s sanctifying grace really is a profound gift from God, intended to do God’s will through you in your obedience.

But there is more, remember the disciples are in timeout. This timeout is the gap between “going fishing” and “bold proclamation.” And like the disciples, what we do in the gap matters. For the disciples, that gap is the upper room. In the gap, we wrestle with our past, we wrestle with our present, and we wrestle with our future. All of this wrestling sets the stage for the work of God in our lives.

**Coming to Terms with the Past**. The past has often left a mark. From the past we carry baggage, residue, wounds, and default settings. An honest movement toward sanctifying grace means that we recognize and turn over to God, this baggage; where we’ve been and what got us there so we don’t remain stuck there. The fruit of sanctification is most evident when a person no longer blames everyone and everything else for their own sin. It’s not that they aren’t aware of the conditions that might have contributed; it’s simply that they recognize their responsibility to own their own role.

**Coming to Terms with the Present**. This is a loaded part of self-reflection that means looking at our shame, guilt, ego, and arrogance. It’s reckoning with our preferences and demands, our prejudices and biases. It’s owning our fears and self-deceit. Coming to terms with our present means identifying our reluctance to embrace the fullness of God’s work in our lives and surrendering that reluctance. It means renouncing our allegiances to ideologies, political platforms, and idolatries that run counter to God’s kingdom at work in our lives.

**Coming to Terms with our Future.** For many of us, when we became Jesus followers, we sought to hand over our stories to Jesus for the sake of redemption. Unfortunately, we kept the pen—you know, just in case we wanted to write a few of our own chapters. The work in the gap means we hand over the pen to Jesus, and he scripts our story and every line that follows. Coming to terms with the future means we are willing to enter the kind of relationship with God where we take our cues from him. It’s a posture of malleability, willingly formed and transformed in an ongoing manner. Jesus becomes not only Redeemer of our story but also Lord of what comes next.

The gap is a place of radical consecration; we surrender our lives, our will, our world to the Lord. It is a period of self-reflection; a place of looking deep into the center of our being and our world to see who we have become and what the Lord would like to change. The gap is a place of discovery, where we will discover the things, we never thought were possible due to the limits we set for ourselves. The costly work of sacrifice and self-denial is done in the gap.

The gap sets the stage for some of the deepest work of the Spirit in our lives. What is the Lord calling you to that you think is impossible? What limits have you set that are preventing you from achieving the goals God has set for your life? Are there things in your past that are pushing your life off the path that God has for you? Are there events and taking place in your life right now that are distracting you and making this Christian walk difficult for you to maneuver? DO you feel a change coming in the future and you are not sure how you will ever be able to manage it. The Lord knows your struggles, you only need to submit them to Him and allow him to work them through.

Today we are invited to reconsecrate our life with the Lord; we are invited to rededicate our will to His will; and we are invited to revive the Spirit in our life that may have been pushed aside by the world in which we live. Today as we close, I invite you to come to the altar and do these things, in the name of God the Father.