

Power Behind Simplicity
Sermon by Pastor Hey Young Horton
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A few years ago, I saw a sign, “Simplify”. Even though I was silently reading it, I felt this 8 letter word was shouting at me. My life at that time, was jam packed with responsibilities on tight schedules. I finished one thing and needed to jump right into the next without a break in between. My life was full of obligations, I was physically tired and emotionally drained. I became irritable and really lacked the patience I should have been showing to others.

I realized that I needed to set boundaries and make my schedule less cluttered. So that day when I finally arrived home, I took some time to sort out my life:

what was urgent,

what was important,

what were things I could put off until later,

and most importantly what things could I let go of...

This exercise really helped, as suddenly my priorities became clear and my schedule became much more “simplified.” Simplifying my schedule opened a door which allowed me to see things I was unable to see before. It helped me to regain my mental and physical health. I learned the power behind “Simplicity.”

During that same time, when I read the Bible, I saw that Jesus had taught his people to simplify their lives.

As we read today’s Bible passage,

Therefore, do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father

knows that you need all these things. “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

I remember a man shared his secret to happiness. He said, every night on his way to bed, he intentionally left all of his problems outside of his bedroom, for his problems could wait for him out there until the next morning. That allowed him to get a good night’s rest and then face those problems when he opened the door the next morning with renewed energy.

This simple rule helped him maintain his happiness.

For Christians, simplicity has another meaning. It is not only making things less cluttered, but also trusting in God, realizing that God will handle many of those haunting issues for us.

Jesus also said,

²⁸ “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

From this passage, I hear God’s desire to interact with our lives and God’s willingness to help us with our burdens.

How many times have we tried to control our lives? We work hard planning out even the smallest of details, but later we find out that our lives do not go as we planned. When most of us encounter unexpected hardships, we struggle to fix the problems, and often, we find out that the more we try, the messier and harder it gets.

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Perhaps the answer to our troubled life can be as simple as just coming to the Lord and opening the door to invite God to work with us.

My husband and I have a special expression we often use “What a Coincidence.” As we were growing together in faith, we got to witness many times that things seemed to just happen to us when we needed it the most.

These days as we grow older, we realized that many of these things did not just happen accidentally. We sensed that we had been guided by some anonymous hands.

A few weeks ago, while checking on my mountain house, I was very concerned about the overgrown trees behind the house. Like most of you, I had just witnessed how these trees could have blown down and damaged the property. In fact, all three of my household’s cars’ windshields were smashed by the [last storms. I expressed my fear to my husband, but we honestly did not know whom to contact, because the back of my mountain house was a difficult place to work, as there is no way the machine can get in there.

That very afternoon, we saw a truck parked next to my house. On the side of the truck it was printed "Mountain Side Tree Service". The owner was parked there to take down some large trees in the vacant lot right next my house. The next thing we witnessed was this guy climbing up a 100 feet tall tree with a chainsaw.

[Show video of Tree Man climbing tree with chain saw and cleats.]

Didn't I say we were worrying about how to find a person who can take down the trees without a machine?

Gary and I looked at each other and said, "What a Coincidence" but in our hearts we heard God speaking to us with a smile, “I have been with you.”

Because God said, “God will be with us”, we can simplify our lives. We can relax about our future, because we know God will be there behind our simple life.

These days, our country and the rest of the world is going through some serious challenges. The pandemic is a tough one for all of us, but the tragic death of George Floyd has inspired many people to come out and take a stand against racism and social injustice. Racism in our society is a very complicated, toxic, and deeply rooted problem. I hear many people crying out, “What can we do to change?” It appears to me there is no easy way to eradicate this ugly evil called racism.

As I struggle with this, a book I read a long time ago came into my heart.

The book is titled “All I really need to know I learned in Kindergarten.” Written by Robert Fulghum.

It says

“all I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandpile at Sunday School. These things I learned...

Share everything

Play fair

Don't hit people

Put things back where you found them

Clean up your mess

Don't take things that aren't yours

Say you are sorry when you hurt somebody

Wash your hands before you eat

Flush

When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together...”

Everything we need to solve our social problem is in this simple teaching. Don't hit people, share everything, play fair, say sorry when you hurt somebody.

I love this part, “when you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, stick together” ... As the world is fighting against this pandemic, we need to watch out for each other and stick together.

Everyone wear masks!

When the world becomes more complicated and drives us into chaos, maybe we need to simplify all of our tangled emotions, tensions, and hurts with the wisdom we have learned in kindergarten and get back to basics.

When we all sincerely follow these simple rules and open our eyes to recognize God who has been with us all along, we may witness the world turning around for good.

A couple of weeks ago during one of my Stay Connected online group chats, I heard a beautiful story. Something so simple but yet so powerful to bring healing to the broken heart. Originally, I wanted Sue Swezey to share her story in person, but because last night we had to cancel our outdoor service today due to the weather, we hurriedly recorded her story last night. Thank you, Sue.

[Show video of Sue Swezey]

A Gift of Love

My husband, Gordy, of almost 58 years died April 21st this year. He had been ill and failing for many years.

On March 22 he was admitted to the hospital and then transferred to Rehab. By this time Social Distancing was in effect and the country was in shutdown mode. I was unable to speak with him or to visit him. I was tortured that month by thoughts that I knew he felt I'd abandoned him. Although he passed into Jesus' arms very peacefully, I was not as prepared for it as I thought. (I was with him along with one of our children and a grandson. We were joined the entire long day for an 8-hour zoom which included our whole family. That was beautiful!) The next morning my phone went off with a text that read, "I'm dropping off something for you at your front door." I wrote back, "When?" Answer, "Dang! The message just went thru. I was there 1/2 hour ago."

I went to my door and there was a beautiful arrangement of fresh-cut tulips in a pretty vase.

"Oh My!" I gasped. She knows how much I love her tulips. What a gift!

By the time I got back to my kitchen there was a new text message: "Are you up for company?" Oh WOW. I called her back and 15 minutes later she was at my house. We walked 6' apart, to Perkins Center where we walked the whole grounds. Then we sat at opposite ends of a picnic table. For 2 hours my dear friend just listened. My heart felt cared for. I shouldn't have been surprised, but I was amazed that someone, not family, would willingly enter the realm of my fresh grief.

The next morning there was another text. “Ready for company?” – “I’ll bring my big beach umbrella.”

Shortly after, she arrived with her umbrella. I had washed 2 chairs clean of winter’s sludge. Again, she was here for 2 hours. We sat on my patio, and we/I talked, and she listened. I am not sure if there has been another example in my life of the expression of the love of Jesus Christ and discipleship. I will treasure the rest of my life the love and support my friend gave me in the first 2 days of my “new life”. This was/is what being a follower of Jesus is all about.

Hey Young asked me to relate this small story to you. But I have to add an additional thought. Mostly, we don’t know how to handle death and another person’s grief – how and when to reach out. I say to you, “Please, try it, reach out.” You can never know the value of such a gift of love.

Power behind the simple gift of love.

Last Tuesday, we had a staff meeting via zoom. During the meeting, I saw a banner hanging in Donna Bane’s background, I asked her to share what the banner said. It said, “respect, accept others, be confident, think before you speak, be open minded to others’ ideas, lend a hand, do what is right when no one is watching, be sensitive to others’ feelings, appreciate, be polite, celebrate your differences, be generous, speak kindly, tell the truth, brighten some one’s day, listen, help out, inspire, encourage, [etc.]” If we **all** do one kind thing a day, we just might change the world. And, when everyone is doing these simple things, the world will change. How true it is! And how simple the things are that we can do to contribute good to the world! We might change the world!

My brothers and sisters, God does not want us to live in fear and worry. God does not want us to be pressured by heavy burdens. I am convinced that God wants us to be free from all our bondages, heavy burdens, worries, fear, and toxic hatred. God wants us to be like children. God wants us to simplify our lives, do the simple things, and be able to see the power behind the simplicity. Then, we may hear God’s whispering voice, “Don’t worry, I am here.”

Amen!