

February 26 2017

Scripture Lesson Hebrews 12:1-3
Galatians 5:25-26

Sermon *Keeping in Step with the Spirit*

I am going to start in Galatians; chapter 5 verse 22. Paul wrote to the Galatians, who lived in a somewhat unfriendly mountainous territory in what is now central Turkey. He had some hostile things to say earlier in the book of Galatians in this letter but then he talks about the nature of Christian freedom in the moral and ethical way that Christians should act. Starting verse 22; "By contrast the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. There is no law against such things. And those belong to Christ Jesus who was crucified the flesh, with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another."

This is the word of our Lord.

I am going to do a little 1960's advertising test –dad-dad-dad um-dum- do you remember that? It was what it was called the Teaberry shuffle. Now the scripture that I just read talks about keeping in line and following the Holy Spirit –but the Greek is much more in keeping in step with the Holy Spirit. And keeping in step, I am thinking about my high days in my marching band. I must tell you that it took me about ten years to want to watch a parade after I finally got out of high school. Davenport had a very small the band was the pep band, the concert band, the full solo ensemble band and the marching band. So come May, we were found in Wenatchee in the marching band in the Apple Blossom Parade. We left like something like four in the morning marching in full uniform with high collar wearing a military type hat wearing a chin strap. It must have been at least 120 degrees as it can only be in Wenatchee. We were doing the Teaberry shuffle which was something like this pum-pum pop-pop-pum-opo only a whole lot faster that only you can do when you are 16. We did this on the brick roads and some of which were hills which we were doing the Teaberry shuffle our way through Wenatchee.—it was an insult to the Tiajuna Brass; we were not the Tiajuna Brass. Keeping in step has its challenges. If you have ever been in a marching band or if you were in the military you learn to keep in step. The idea of it is you will watch the people around, you will make accurate turns—this kind of wide turns or these short narrow kind of turns, you be in straight lines all of the time you will get to your destination—whip off your uniform and eat your hot dog and pop they give you. That's what we had to do.

When Paul talks to the Galatians he tells them to keep in step. Keeping in step was an everyday picture to the Galatians. It was strongly Roman. They were Roman providence. If you were in any part of Rome the most familiar and common sights, you had, were the Roman's soldiers. Roman soldiers trained and trained to march, in fact they marched all the way from Africa to Turkey clear all the way up to Britain. Some of the soldiers that were in Galatians may have come from Britain or from France. They came from Roman or all over; they were a blended army and they all knew how to march. If you were not at war but were at peace, in a march you would be able to do about 19 of our miles in 5 hours while wearing about 75 pounds worth of gear. Now if the Romans were in a fast step it would be about 23 of our miles because they didn't stop every five hours they kept going in a march. And where ever you saw them you saw their marching ability and you thought of the might of Rome. Rome had control of every

part of your life. When Paul said keeping step he was probably not talking about the Teaberry shuffle; he was saying these Romans from all over the empire who marched in precision. By the way they did not have drums that anybody could see. The Romans did all of their- in step marching just by watching .It was amazing. They were known by their precision, it was a picture to keep in step with the spirit. He knew this was something that he had told them before; however, he figured they could hear it once more and it wouldn't hurt to repeat. These Galatians were not keeping in step with the spirit. They were not living the life that Paul wanted them to live. They were not keeping in line or as the scripture says, let the spirit guide you. If we live in the spirit and that wasn't a yes or no question. If they were Christians they were live in the spirit. If we are Christians we are to be living the Holy Spirit. All Christians have this gift; we live in the spirit of the new life and freedom in Christ. Paul doesn't stop there is a responsibility on our part, he says, if we live in the spirit we are to be guided by the spirit and we are going to be in a straight line aligned with the Holy Spirit. We are to live our Christian life according to the Holy Spirit principles. The Holy Spirit show us when we are sinning. Tells us when we are on thin ice. Holy Spirit shows us when we have an opportunity to be in God's spirit. We are to follow the Holy Spirit leading, in other words we have to live a life that permeated by the Holy Spirit. This is much different from an occasionally consideration or asking the Holy Spirit to help in time of crisis. We have all done that we have all been in crisis and we have asked God or the Holy Spirit to show us the way. We don't know what to do. What Paul is saying keep in step with it instead of just once in a while? We are not to live a life basis on chance. We are not to live a life based on our feeling. We are to live a life where perfect love casts out fear we are live a life where the spirit leads us sometimes to places we would never think of going.

I was asked by the committee after we met a couple of times.—how did you find us? In Newport at the UCC church? Well you know it is not exactly like you have this big flashing beacon broad casting “looking for a pastor”. I don't even know anybody today in Newport except for all of you who belong to the United Church of Christ. When my Lutheran friend said we can share pastors. I talked to them and I put my name in but gee you know I remember the United Church of Christ share fellowship maybe I should look and there was Newport on the national website for the UCC. And I said to myself-Well I just might try that so I made a call to the conference office and sent in my profile to the conference. And the conference minister asked me a few questions and said and sent it on to you and here I am. I knew where Newport was, that was not a surprise to me but how did I get here. I believe there was a lot of listening to the Holy Spirit all along the way. It wasn't my friend the Lutheran. It wasn't myself; it wasn't your congregation and even the person that typed that profile at the national level. The Holy Spirit permeated them. We dare not step back and say we are done with the Holy Spirit for now until the next crisis to make a decision. Instead we are to be and do what God wants us to do all of the time. Our priorities and purpose should be keeping in step with the Holy Spirit.

You know the version that is called the Message and I like the way he talks about this scripture. This is the kind of life that we have chosen. Christ has chosen us and we have chosen to follow him the life of the spirit we need to be sure we do not hold it as just as an idea in our head or sentiment it in our hearts or but in every work out every detail of our lives. Perry Young writes a devotional column describes it this way, try to see the help of the spirit as you go through this day. Every day you will say- let the spirit guide you, guide you in all my conversations, guide me in my leisure time, in my work time. Guide me when I am stuck in 6 car traffic jam in Newport. Guide me when my teenager is –go in the other room please. Guide me when the neighbor throws corncobs over the fence. Guide me when I

don't feel very nice today. Guide me when I feel wonderful today and let me share that wonder. Guide me and order my life every day. Big decisions should be taken to the Holy Spirit but also the everyday life. We should look at the Holy Spirit for directions that is when we get the kindness, the goodness and the gentleness and the self control and all those parts that are gifts of the spirit. When we are aligned with God's plan and purpose we know the God value. God's call for our life and we are to seek and listen.

One time when I lived in Centralia I was talked into being in the in trying to be the world's longest line dance. You thought I knew my Teaberry shuffle but you know now my line dance. We were out at the fairgrounds and we did not make the record for the world's longest line dance because those of us at the furthest end could not hear the music that the people at the beginning could hear and we were out of sync with them so we did not accomplish it. That is what the Holy Spirit wants us to do, to listening closely so we are in line and we will not be out of step. We should never feel we should not keep our eyes upon Jesus and our hearts to open to the Holy Spirit.

I want to read for just a few moments some of the other responses this morning Hebrews chapter 12 verses 1 through 3 is on page 1099

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfected of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.
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Race was another metaphor that was common to the people in the Roman Empire. Perseverance is needed that for our march, for our race we need to be aware and watch out for what trips us up. My husband will say almost anything can trip me up; don't listen to him; I did get here without bumping. The Holy Spirit is very good at pointing out to us where we are getting tripped up; show me where I need to change, that is not popular in our world today. Show me where I was at fault. I am sorry and I want to be different. Show me. The Holy Spirit is like a mirror and shows us I am not eager for people to tell me I am wrong. I would much rather have the Holy Spirit tell me that but if I want to be in line with what God wants me to do I have to do that. We also have to watch out according to scripture the weight that wears us down. Sometimes it is the good stuff-its family, its fun, and things like that but that slows us down. One thing about weight it strengths our stamina. We don't want to carry any more than we have to and one of things that we carry is worry. I worry. Our worries and fears can absolutely frighten us but the Holy Spirit can immunize it, I think. Call on the Holy Spirit; we say that word in the right prospective. Now what we do if we recognize that God does send us on a journey, a race, or a march, we should desire to be faithful.

The second that we anticipate the Holy Spirit is at work. The Holy Spirit is not silent and the Holy Spirit most of the time won't push its way into our life, that will not happen. But the Holy Spirit will teach us and will show us and it will quicken our hearts to do the right thing and stop our walk in the wrong thing. Here is the Greek word for the Holy Spirit -parclate -that word means to come along side and that is the most wonderful part of the Holy Spirit. We are not alone and Holy Spirit will not leave

us—no matter what we go through or deal with, no matter what we do the Holy Spirit walks in step with us but we need to have our eyes open , if we don't keep in step with the Holy Spirit, we get left behind.

We had a mission trip to Kamiah, Idaho and there were two vans and I was in the second van and I had the directions. The man in the front van did not have the directions. He kept going past the exits and he missed the exit and we came along side shouting and waving and he and others shouted and waved back at us. We need to refuse to be stagnant, refuse to be standing fast or to over plan or to be too full of our selves, and go ahead of the Holy Spirit but go along side.

My mom used to listen to short wave radio and she listened to people all over the world especially in the middle of the night. She used to get a lot of interesting things on it. She developed a listening ear for those people. Our concern is for God that we develop a listening ear and need to understand who God is and make every effort to keep in step with God's spirit. As we approach Lent let us this be our discipline, to be good listeners, to march in step, and listen to leading of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray.

Precious God, We thank you for your gift of the Holy Spirit. We thank you that he is ever present, full of power and help us to rely only on that power and give up our ways for your ways- which is the best way
Amen