

June 7 2015

Scripture Lessons ~

Psalm 138

John 14:8-17, 25-27

Sermon *Haven't I Met You Someplace Before?*

A number of years ago, I was still pastoring out in Ritzville, I was taking some downtime in Spokane and decided to take in a movie in what was then the Lincoln Heights Cinema up on 29th on the South Hill. As I was going in a young man neatly dressed in a theatre usher's uniform, took my ticket and he looked vaguely familiar to me but then most everybody vaguely looks familiar to me. I didn't think too much about it. I went in to watch the show and when I came back out there was that same young man again ready with his plastic garbage bag and going in to start cleaning up the theatre where I had seen the movie. So he stopped for a moment to put some trash in his bag and then he almost grabbed me by the lapel and stopped me and said, "You know you look vaguely familiar to me. Haven't I seen you someplace before?" "Isn't your name Russ?" And weren't you my counselor in Camp in N-Sid-Sen". "My name is Ryan and my mother's name was Trudy and she worked with you at camp, too". I was floored but then it started coming back to me. Eight years before that I was a Ryan's counselor when he was only in the fifth grade. I had met him the year before when he and his mother would come to meetings because he and his mother, he helped a little bit, too, we had shared a smaller three day kid's camp for children. But that year was Ryan's first time away from his parents. It was his first time away for a whole week of time at all and was Ryan ever homesick. For three days Ryan cried, he mopped and he threw up. He refused to eat. He couldn't sleep and I being the gung-oh counselor I was I stuck with him. I walked with him. I ate with him. I talked with him. And I stayed up nights with him and I read stories to him but you know no matter what I did tried it didn't work and Ryan went home early from that week-long camp and I felt like a complete failure as a camp counselor. And eight years later here is little Ryan, all grown up, and he was working in the theatre. He told me, he graduated from high school. He was running his own business as a dance TJ, and he is planning to attend Whitworth College and preparing to enter the Christian ministry when he graduates. What in Heaven's name caused the transition in that scared little boy? Well I am convinced that among other parts, God's Holy Spirit had a large role to play in Ryan's life. And how did the seed of faith get planted? Well how do any seeds of faith get planted by God's hand, of course? How was the seed cultivated so it could take root, grow and be healthy? Well, by me, by Sunday School teachers, by parents, his pastor, friends, and certain

members of the church, just like you and just like me By God's grace, I and many other helped Ryan to cultivate his faith. And because of those small seeds that were planted so many years ago Ryan had persevered through good times and bad to love and serve God, I thought in a meaningful way.

The young folks being confirmed today which we have spent some significant time together this past years as well. Not enough I would have liked to have had more we did the best we could in the time that we had. There might have been time you guys you may have had your doubts about wanting to spend time with Pastor Russ in the course of this past year, maybe want to finish the program which we have laid out before us for the year. But through it all I just want to say again I tried to love you. I tried to be a good pastor to you. I tried to be a friend to you.

After today, though our relationship is going to change just a little bit. I am still going to be your pastor. I will still be your friend but it will be full member of our congregation in the eyes of the church with all the privileges and all the responsibilities that go along with the title member. That does not mean you are on your own as far as your Christian faith is concerned, because I and many others are going to be here for you but it does mean that you will have a lot more responsibility with your own relationship with God. And in the midst of this, the temptation is going to be there to walk away with your mission accomplished now that you have finished with what you have been doing in confirmation class. Before you entertain any audacious thought of that I am inviting you to stop and I am inviting all of us to listen to what John's Gospel has to say to us this morning. Because Jesus own disciples had to have the same temptation after he left them to be with God after the resurrection but he left some instructions. He left them a survival plan on how to make in the world that can be really difficult to navigate.

The plan came in the form of the person and the person was God's Holy Spirit. I like to call it, God in action working through other people and their faith; working through Sunday School; worship; through parents and through the church to help each one of us to get through when times get tough. And what does John tell us the spirit can do for any of us. John calls the spirit, The Counselor, and a modern translation Advocate. Like any other counselor or advocate only a lot better I found in this passage three ways that the Holy Spirit can help us in our faith. First of all the Spirit teaches us how to live a joyful life and a healthy life. The spirit gives us boundaries for the way that we should live. Secondly the Holy Spirit guides us to the places we should to go in life by helping us, I think, calling in life and to make those tough decisions that you have to make in finding our way in God's world Third and finally the Holy Spirit helps us to find a sense of comfort, a sense of peace, a sense of contentment about who we are and what we have been called to do in life. No matter what might happen to us in the future God

wants us to remember how much we are loved and here's the kicker-the spirit can only offer us any of these things if we open our hearts and if we seek to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. We have to be open to accepting the gift. So here's your charge, here's your plan for the future, eight or ten or twenty years from now I want to walk into a movie theatre; I want to walk into a grocery store; I want to walk into a shopping mall; and I want you to come up to me and ask me a really important question, "Haven't I seen you some place before?" And I want to hear at least from one of the three of you is to become a pastor, I know there are a long line of Kochs and Paul Koch messed it up by going into the eye business instead maybe there is hope for Chris but more importantly that what you choose to do in the course of your life. I want to you the most beautiful words you could ever speak to me as a pastor, that you love God with all your heart and that you seek the best you can that you serve God in the things that you do in everyday life.

Oh by the way our friend Ryan I met him in the first time in 25 years this year at the annual conference committee in Spokane and he is pastoring a church in the Puget Sound

Together we say AMEN