

13th Sunday of Pentecost, September 11, 2011

Defining the relationship-DTR

September 11th was a defining moment in the history of this country. There have been other defining moments but in my mind having lived about 2 hours away from the world trade centers, the raw emotional reality of what happened on 9/11 10 years ago captured not only my attention but also the attention of the world. The immediate response to this crisis drove this country to its best. Brotherhood flourished, churches were filled, and servant hood was practiced. People were ready to fight for freedom and the polarization of political parties was non-existent. We all worked together in unity! You remember that day, the day America cried out to God. That day, September 11, 2001 was a defining moment in US history.

Just as there are defining moments in history there are defining moments in life. (The quiet game illus.) But seriously a defining moment in all our lives are things like marriage, succeeding or failing in a new business venture, having a child, those are moments that define our lives, the changes that have major impacts on our lives. Sometimes there are defining moments in our walk with God. (Pastor Fehner, C.C.C. ILLUS)

Sometimes God will ask us to define our relationship with him and that day could be today. In life, you come to a fork in the road and you have to ask yourself, now am I going to listen to what God has to say or am I going to continue to live my life for me, listening to others telling me how I should live? Am I going to live in the lust of my own flesh or am I going to put on the full armor of God? Am I going to trust God and his truth or someone/something else? Do I want control of my own life, doing what I want, saying what I want, being what I want, and getting what I want? Or am I going to glorify God by believing, trusting, and loving him above self and all things, believing in the forgiveness of my sins? God gives us the power to say yes to him, to trust him, to love him, to follow him! However, we have the power to say no to God and the more we say no to God the colder and harder our hearts are to the Holy Spirit of God. Such was the case for many in the religious community in Jesus day. Abraham defined his relationship with God on several occasions two of which I want to share with you this morning.

DTR1- God commands Abraham to leave his home. Leave your country, leave your family, leave your people, leave your fathers household, leave the place where everything is safe and secure and familiar, leave the gods you are worshipping today and journey to the land I will show you. This was for Abraham a radical and courageous step of faith! Abraham was faced with an epic DTR moment. Will he stay, will he go, will he follow this

God who is completely unfamiliar to him? Or, will Abraham say NO to God? God was calling Abraham to separate himself from the world, the world he knew and loved! To separate himself from his own gods, from old values, from old priorities, to be separated from the old way of life to a new life *and then to follow the one true God!* God was in the beginning of the divine process of birthing his new Church, the 'ecclesia' which literally means those who are called out.

Abraham was a rich Man! He was a respected man. Abraham was known in his community. He was in a place of safety and familiarity. Now Abraham is told by this strange new God, at least new to him, to pick up and leave and travel into the wilderness. No more networks, no more connections, and no land or prospects. And Abraham went! He was 75 years old.....and he choose to stake everything on GOD! Abraham went, he left, and he took a giant leap of faith. This was a defining moment in Abraham's life; this was a defining moment in Abraham's relationship to God as he began to relate to God as Lord.

DTR 2: The Covenant:

Gods desire to enter into a covenant with Abraham is baffling. Why does God desire to be in relationship with him or anyone of us sinners for that matter? What does God get out of this covenant outside of heartache and the personal suffering in his Son? The covenant truly reveals the depth of love he has for Man. When we entered into a relationship with God (baptism), we certainly faced the most significant DTR moment in our lives. Baptism means 'washing' and in the case of sinful men, it means the washing away of sin or the forgiveness of sins through the cross that Christ suffered on. We become a child of God and all the promises of resurrection living become ours. It truly is mind boggling that any God would have such a love for sinful children. We are his chosen people today by the will and love of God!

Why was Abraham chosen? Why was Israel chosen? Why has God chosen us? We were chosen, Israel was chosen, Abraham was chosen for a purpose, to model community and in so doing bring glory to God. Our calling is to serve! Our calling is the same as Abrahams calling and the same as Israel's calling, to bring Glory to God by shinning a light in the darkness of this world, to reflect his glory in what we say and more importantly in what we do. The Great commission of making disciples did not really start or begin with Jesus, it began in Genesis 12:3. "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and **IN YOU** all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Each of us is blessed to be a blessing; to reflect his Glory; we are called to model unity in community. And as we do so, the world will be drawn into a relationship with God through Christ by the power of God's Spirit. John records the high priestly prayer of Jesus and I like to read this prayer when I pray for His Church. This is a prayer we should all pray. Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth, I do not ask for these only but for those whoever believes in me, that they may be

one, just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they may be also in Us, so that the world may believe.” Now listen to me carefully, Jesus prayed this prayer just before his arrest and trial and He chose not to pray for the disciples increased skill level in evangelism techniques or church structures or Godly leadership all of which are important in the Church.....it just that there is nothing more important than praying for unity in community because that is how the world will believe the truth. Jesus’ high priestly prayer is a DTR moment; Jesus is defining what the church should be, why God called Abraham, why God made Israel a holy nation, why at Pentecost the Spirit gave birth to the Church. So that in community, in fellowship, through relationships, and through unity in the Body; the Church could be a light to bring good news to the nations that God so loved us that he sent His only begotten Son to die so sins would be forgiven and by His resurrection eternal life could be promised. When we are in community, when we are united as one, devoted to prayer, witness, sharing ourselves with others, studying the Word together, loving one another, serving and listening to one another, and holding each other accountable in love, we bring Glory to God.

Today as the new Senior Pastor I am calling you to such a relationship! I am calling you to come into a deeper relationship with God, into a deeper relationship with one another than what you currently may be experiencing. And the only reason, the only purpose for me doing this, is that God might be glorified. I know that for some of you, today, this very moment may be your DTR moment.

(Sign up for 101 now takes place)

Pastor Ralph Tobias Joeckel (Pastor Toby)

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