

FAITH WORDS TALK SERIES

Zeal

For I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them.

Philippians 1:27

Each week in this TALK series, the words I think will be what drives the writing are not. Beginning to write without knowing which word will be chosen is common in the weekly ritual for dreaming up a topic title. There are always great words in the Ted head that are considered whenever I sit to write. The words “healing”, or “prayer”, or “divine order”, or “inner peace”, or “prosperity”, or “world peace” bounce around in my mind. In addition there are phrases that drift in and out. Almost every week, I have thought, “Today, I’ll write about “let go, let God.” One day maybe. Anything is possible.

Today has been no exception, and the same words plus have been considered. The Faith Word—Zeal—came from an article by Pastor Lara when she shared how Bishop Lowry, members of his cabinet, and others have praised Martin United Methodist Church as an example for others to follow.

When the Covid news hit and we all began to realize our lives were on a sure road to different, Pastor Lara was less concerned about what would change. Her focus in that staff meeting was on how we safely worship together, learn together, and remain in communication with each other. She started talking about Zoom. I remember thinking “what is she talking about?”

I’ll be honest here, when she said the word Zoom, my mind went to an 80s R&B/Soul album in my stack at home. It was Aretha Franklin’s album titled “Who’s Zoomin Who?” What our Pastor was discussing had nothing to do with “busting’ up with a boyfriend. Her words had everything to do with being zealous in staff’s efforts to take a best approach to a new way of worshiping, learning, and communicating, and so...we Zoomed.

There are over 100 verses in the Bible that have some reference to zeal. But the one that caught my attention was Paul’s letter to the people in Philippi. The verse says, “I boast about you to the people of Macedonia saying that (you) have been ready since last year.” Then he proceeds with “your zeal has stirred up most of them”. I know there are at least two ways to look at the words, and every reader can make up your own mind about how to decipher them. The key to the message is one that we should all consider. How does our zeal influence others? What words of encouragement or disparagement will be heard? How will it affect the listener?

An author/philosopher I enjoy reading is Howard Thurman. Howard is credited with saying, “Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.” Wherever my conscience takes me, I find myself drifting to his words. When I feel down, trampled on, or just plain tired, I recall these words, state them as my intentions, and get better in life.

Knowing what Wm. C. Martin UMC accomplished is rewarding and makes me feel proud. Martin's leaders and members have fought through the fear and anxiety...and driven on as an influence to many leaders in the Central Texas Conference and beyond. I believe you as a congregation and friends just dropping in to see what the excitement is about have made a loving, caring, and inspiring difference many lives. I know we can and will continue.

Ask yourself, When do I feel joy the most? What is the driving force that inspires me with zeal and enthusiasm? Answers will produce a variety of interests. I long to travel again, and I'm guessing, I not alone. Meeting new people is a way of returning to a life filled with zeal. Maybe it will be learning a new sport or hobby, or just walking mask free in a park, around a lake, or simply a strolling around the block.

The Psalmist wrote:

But let the righteous be joyful. Let them exult before God; let them be jubilant with joy.
Psalm 68:3

When we follow our passion and actively do things that make us feel enthusiastic, we align with the Spirit. With faith we joyfully affirm, ***I come alive through the power of zeal.***

Peace Always

Ted