

Message – Companis Sunday – October 15, 2017

Good morning. On your church's website, and perhaps in some other printed material – the theme for today is "What does the Lord require of you?" If you have paid any attention at all to that publicity, I applaud you for being here. Because that is a difficult question to choose to be challenged to grapple with, at any time of life.

Of course, the answer to that is the rest of the verse for today as most of us probably remember it...from Micah 6:8

*To **act justly** and to **love mercy** and to **walk humbly with your God.***

However, I want to share with you the entire verse from the Common English Bible:

He has told you, human one, what is good and

what the Lord requires from you:

to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God.

But let's hear that again with an image in our minds. Close your eyes if that is helpful to you for this exercise, and imagine two small children, about elementary school age - on a rollercoaster – plummeting steeply down in their small rollercoaster seat, holding on for dear life to the bar in front of them – the only thing that keeps them from flying amuk, their cheeks forced up by the power of the velocity of their movement to meet their eyes, their mouths wide open letting out the hugest screams they ever produced – and a look on their faces that is a distinct cross between joy and fear.

Now – keeping that image alive – listen again: *He has told you, human one, what is good and what the Lord requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God.*

Now, perhaps, we have a better sense of what it is like to live more deeply in faith, wherever we get our inspiration – whether it be from ancient sacred texts, new writings by wisdom people of all ages, or from our own quiet wonderings and desires and needs.

My name is Karen Hundrieser, I am placed in my work at Elizabeth Gregory Home – a day shelter for homeless women - by Companis.

I am a retired United Methodist pastor – but please don't hold that against me. Actually – I took an early retirement from my work in the Church to respond to my own sense of what I am called to do and be with the days or years I have left on this earth.

When I came to Seattle on June 1st, I already knew about Companis. One of my oldest and dearest friends in Chicago is an old friend of Craig Darling – she suggested I touch base with Companis – even if it was only to find a new community of friends.

And I have found so much more.

When Companis received my Resume – they immediately knew where I could be of service. But even before we had that conversation about work, I was invited me to lunch just to share life stories – to become friends and colleagues on the journey together.

Let's back up a little though. My brother and his family live in Seattle. I have been visiting them every year – and sometimes twice a year for the past 12 years. During those visits I fell in love with the Seattle area – I love the beautiful vegetation, the proximity to water, the diversity of people, and the outdoor way of life (and the politics). I had been saying for years that I would one day live here. So my coming here was not the result of a dart thrown at a map...just wanted you to know that.

When I decided it was time for me leave my work in the Midwest, my brother and his family opened their home to me. And my children and grandchildren graciously granted me their blessings.

Before I was a pastor, I had worked with the homeless population in southern Wisconsin – and had a sense that I wanted to do that again.

And the staff at Companis listened to all that, took it all into consideration, heard my longings, and, seeing my strengths and experience on paper, matched me with a wonderful organization where I am challenged to revisit and refashion past experiences and to mold them into this new challenge. I am working with a beautiful group of colleagues, where decisions are made together, with honest and even sometimes difficult conversation.

Our clients have stories to tell, answers to discover, frustrations to act out, joys to share – and I get to be a part of it all.

It is very much like that roller coaster ride I had you envision earlier. Every day I am sure my face is that distinct cross between joy and fear.

But what a privilege it is to live out my calling – to use the best I have to offer for those who need and ask us to journey with them, to help them find resources, to speak for those who have no voice – to offer hospitality at its finest to better this space we all live in together.

My call to ministry has been the same for many, many years.

And I share my call this way: to be part of creating communities of hospitality where strengths are honored and weaknesses are made whole.

For me such a calling seems very Biblical. But unfortunately I did not always find congregations to be of like mind.

And while I am able to live that out where I work now, it is more so impressive how that happens at Companis. At regular worker support group meetings we are invited to “check in”. At these meetings new people are embraced immediately. And everything that everyone shares is important and receives loving, kind, strength-building, and justice-filled responses.

I feel cared for here on so many levels.

And, even as a newbie, I am looking for new volunteers to bring into this experience, so that they will not only know the joy of giving and volunteering in some way, but that they will also know the joy of being part of this amazing group of people at Companis.

I don't believe there is a gift or talent or calling that Companis cannot match with a work site. As Gary says, there is a place for everyone.

Do justice – our verse says – doing something requires our whole being – it requires intention

Embrace faithful love – this kind of embracing requires our hearts to be fully active, alive, open to differences, elastic and even tough sometimes

Walk humbly with your God – be alert to what your God is speaking to you – listen – to the earth – to others – to your heart – to thoughts and poems and songs and the wisdom that keep pestering you... that won't leave you alone.

In my life and ministry I have known so many people who lived with the longing to do something, to try something, to change what they do with their time, who wanted to offer something to the community – the world, but they were afraid – that they weren't good enough, young enough, old enough, talented enough. They had old repeating words that told them they had nothing to offer. I know that many of us have the longing for such an invitation as we offer today, but don't have the courage or self-assurance to get on that rollercoaster. It took me a while to get on!

Today I say to you again the words I will never forget, there is a place for everyone. BUT! Be ready for the ride!

And, in the tradition of my good friend Rabbi Chava Bahle, I leave you with this blessing written by John O'Donohue:

Blessed be the longing that brought you here and quickens your soul with wonder.

May you have the courage to listen to the voice of desire that disturbs you when you have settled for something safe.

May you have the wisdom to enter generously into your own unease, to discover the new direction your longing wants you to take.

May the forms of your belonging – in love, creativity, and friendship – be equal to the grandeur and the call of your soul.

May the one you long for long for you.

May your dreams gradually reveal the destination of your desire.

May a secret Providence guide your thought and nurture your feeling.

May your mind inhabit your life with the sureness with which your body inhabits the world.

May your heart never be haunted by ghost-structures of old damage.

May you come to accept your longing as divine urgency.

May you know the urgency with which God longs for you.

May it be so. Thank you for this opportunity.