

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL UGLIES

Series: Finding Yourself, Pt1 January 12, 2020 ser3902

I. 2020 PULPIT SERIES

A. As we approached the end of the year the Lead Team discussed what we felt the LORD would have us address from the pulpit in 2020.

We all strongly felt that the GCCC pulpit needed to address subjects relevant to the age and culture in which we live. In many cases, these are troubling subjects purposefully avoided by pulpits so as to not create controversy and therefore lose parishioners.

For those of you who have attended GCCC for any length of time, you know that I have not been afraid to address these subjects, hopefully with the Holy Spirit's guidance, often head-on.



Today we live in a different age. It is faster paced in many ways than any other preceding decade.

1. *Transportation*—airplanes can travel at 593 mph miles, going from NYC to San Francisco in six and a half hours. **(show photo)** By horse, it takes six months. Do the math. What once took one month

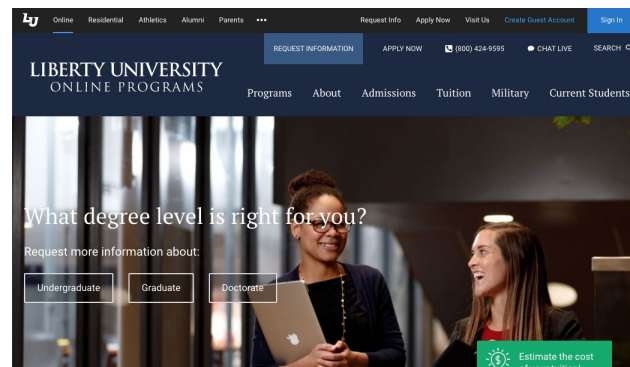
can now be done in one hour. We live in a fast-paced world.

2. Communication—click of a button. In the early 1800's it took 21-29 days for a letter mailed in England to reach a person living in NYC. Today we can instantaneously speak to someone via phone, text, email, Face time or Messenger. We live in a fast-paced world.

3. Education—at your fingertips via Internet and downloads, and the list of “ations” keeps getting longer.

(show photo) LOL!

We live in a fast-paced world.



4. Baking—I remember when it took my mother half a day to bake a lemon meringue pie—maybe more. She would make the dough and let it rise, then roll out the crust by hand, hand squeeze the lemons with the juicer on top of the mixer,

(show both photos)



bake the pie, then spin the meringue in a pan on top of the stove, brown it in the oven—and it was ready to eat.



Today you can go to most grocery stores and buy one in as little time as it takes to checkout. LOL!

But, it won't taste like my mother's. Guaranteed! We live in a fast-paced world.

5. *Wickedness*—I'll use one illustration. What once had to be purchased under the

counter, or in a backroom, can now be acquired by any man or woman—free—in a moment's time with the click of a button...on your phone...or your child's or teen's phone. We live in a fast-paced world.

DID YOU KNOW THAT CHURCHES REFUSED TO USE "LOVE, LUST & LIES" AS CURRICULUM BECAUSE IT ADDRESSED THE SUBJECT OF SEX?

Even though the subject is approached from a Biblical perspective. Other churches refused to put *Hope Beyond Suicide* in their bookstore or library. "It's a taboo subject," they would say. Yet, it's a national epidemic. Recently, Rowan University was rocked with 3 suicides creating a social media outrage.

B. My point is—“troubling” and “relevant” topics should be the domain of the pulpit.

(And the Church said, “You betcha!) **1 Peter 3:15** tells us,

But set Christ^[a] apart^[b] as Lord in your hearts and always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess.^[c]

With that in mind, I felt the Holy Spirit urge me to get alone with Him for 3-4 days to wrap my head around the year and receive direction from Him.



(show photo) It was last minute. I didn’t feel it was fair to lay a sermon on one of the staff over the holiday, so I called Wayne. As God would have it, he was free—and according to him, he can’t remember the last time he was free the first weekend of January.

It was quite lovely. No TV. No radio. No wife (haha—I must admit I did miss Sheryl). No kids. No grandkids. Just peace and quiet.

C. Here’s what I believe the LORD gave me for 2020.

This schedule includes four teachers and three guest speakers, throughout.

JANUARY—*Finding Yourself*

FEBRUARY—*Friend-ing & Unfriend-ing*

MARCH—*What Does a Christian Look Like in the 21st Century?*

APRIL—*True Religion*

MAY—*God Made Me that Way*

JUNE—*God's View of LGBTQ*

JULY—*God in the Movies*

AUGUST—*When God Seems Mean*

SEPTEMBER—*Friends in Conflict*

OCTOBER—*When Life Sucks (show photo)*

Some who have seen the Pulpit Series on social media have voiced their complaint that they don't like the word "sucks." But it got their attention. LOL!

NOVEMBER—*Alone in the Room*



DECEMBER—*Presence or Presents?*

D. Today is the first in “Finding Yourself.”

Let us pray.

II. POINT OF INTRIGUE

A. Middle School and the Uglies.

I recall, when our children were young, thinking:

They’re the two best-looking kids on the planet. Joel was handsome and Noelle was beautiful.

Then when they hit middle school (not sure if it was 7th or 8th grade), I recall thinking, “What happened?” They were in braces. Everything looked out of proportion. I mean these two good-looking kids got hit with the ugly stick!

NOTE! This was a good week for our middle schoolers to be on a winter weekend. LOL!

Furthermore, when a child rolls into the ages of 12-13, a switch flips. This child who thought you were the world, and had all the answers, who was cooperative, respectful, and wanted to be around you and help you 24-7, now becomes a monster. Not quite, but they aren’t who they were. You’re no longer the center of their world, they don’t want you hanging around—unless it’s on his/her terms, and you know nothing. How’d you go from genius to moron in 48 hours? It’s the epitome of the “uglies.”

What are middle school kids doing? Growing up? True. But they're also finding themselves—and for us who are observing, that can be pretty ugly.

B. This isn't anything I haven't said before from this pulpit.

When a person comes to me and says, *"I need to find myself,"* I think, and sometimes say (to my own detriment), *"What do you expect to find? When I find myself, it's rather ugly. It's not myself I need to find, it's the God in me."*

C. This is what we find when we find the "me" in me.

Romans 7:7

⁷ What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! ... if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT SIN IS?

God tells us in His word.

- 1. He gives us the 10 Commandments (*Exo 20*).**
Do you know them?
 - i.** You shall have no other Gods but me.
 - ii.** You shall not make for yourself an idol, nor bow down to it or worship it.

- iii. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.
- iv. You shall remember and keep the Sabbath day holy.
- v. Respect your father and mother.
- vi. You shall not commit murder.
- vii. You shall not commit adultery.
- viii. You shall not steal.
- ix. You shall not give false witness against your neighbor.
- x. You shall not covet.

[MENTION TRANSCRIPTS]

WHENEVER I THINK OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS I'M REMINDED OF THE TIME WHEN MY FATHER DECIDED TO ADDRESS THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ON FATHERS DAY.

We were in the Broadway Theatre at the time. He was one of five speakers with 7 minutes. He decided to address ALL Ten Commandments. I



literally had to say, “Dad, I know you have 8 more to go, but ‘time’s’ up.” (**show photo**—he’s still mad at me even after we ate. LOL!)

2. He gives us the Two Great Commandments (*Matt 22, Mark 12 & Luke 10*):

“Love God” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.” The first part of the Second Great Commandment is rather easy, “*Love your neighbor.*” But the second part is far more difficult—love him/her **as yourself**. How do we love our neighbor as ourselves—now grasp this, if our neighbor needed a car would we help him purchase a car? Would it be the same kind of car we’d buy for ourselves? If it were not the same car, a car that he/she could afford?

Is that what Jesus is saying? You know the *illustration* Jesus gave in answering this very commandment—The Good Samaritan, who took care of the beaten man as if it were his very own self.

The point of this illustration is that it’s not natural to love our neighbors as we love ourselves—it’s supernatural.

In **Romans 7:18** Paul writes this:

¹⁸For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For I want to do the good, but I cannot do

it.^[x] ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but I do the very evil I do not want! ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer me doing it but sin that lives in me.

I know you're scratching your head. LOL! In short, he's saying, "*The me in me is ugly; only the God in me is beautiful.*"

III. HOW DO WE FIND THE GOD, THE BEAUTY, IN US RATHER THAN THE UGLY IN US?

A. Realize that whenever we respond in the flesh, our response is NOT of God, nor the God in us.

²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

1. The result of the flesh is ALWAYS death, whether it be in conversation or deed—**"the wages of sin is death"** (*Romans 6:23*).

WANT TO KILL A MARRIAGE OR FRIENDSHIP?

Respond in the flesh. Want to build a marriage or friendship? Respond in the Spirit. Why has my marriage lasted 44 years? Because I'm such a wonderful guy! LOL! No, because my wife has responded in the Spirit when I've acted in the flesh ... and I might say, there are times when I have responded

in the Spirit when my wife has acted in the flesh. (The latter is less frequent than the former. ☺)

2. The result of living and responding in the Spirit is life:

“He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant ... the Spirit gives life”

(*2 Corinthians 3:6*).

TODAY WE WILL CELEBRATE THE NEW COVENANT.

Let’s do so remembering that whether in conversation or deed, we have the choice, like the Good Samaritan, to yield to the UGLY flesh in us (like the Priest and Levite), or the BEAUTIFUL Spirit in us.

B. Finding God in us is not difficult.

1. Before you speak or act—stop, pray and listen. In essence “pursue God,” which is the first Great Commandment.) In *Jeremiah 29:13* God tells us, “You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all of your heart.”

ILLUSTRATION #1: Why did I take a few days to seek God? I needed to hear Him, free from the distractions good and bad, all around me.

ILLUSTRATION #2: What happens when your schedule doesn’t permit 2-3 days? Guaranteed, you can find 20-30 minutes somewhere, somehow. Shut off the TV. Shut down your phone or computer. Stop. Pray. Listen. And the God in you WILL speak to you.

ILLUSTRATION #3: I've had times when I've only had 2-2 minutes, even 2-3 seconds and when I've prayed and listened, the God in me has always spoken.

C. Most of you in this room are a better person than I.

If God will hear me and let me find the beauty of Him in me rather than the ugly in me, He'll do it for you.

IV. INVITATION

What's the first step in finding God in you? Putting Him there. Here's how!

Admit– your sins have separated you from God. (*Psa 14:1-3; Rom 3: 23*); **Believe** – that God did something about your sins through Jesus Christ. (The final Pascal Lamb/Messiah.) (*Lev 17:10; Heb 9: 19-22*); **Commit** – yourself to His righteousness by confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior. (*Isa 53:5; Col 1:22*); **Do it today!** (*Isa 49:8; 2 Cor 6:2*).

Father in Heaven, I'm sorry for the things I've done that are wrong: I am a sinner; forgive me. Thank You for loving me and sending your Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for my sin. Holy Spirit, come into my heart; Jesus, be my Lord and Savior. I give You my life. Amen!

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