

Sermons at First Church

A Ministry of the Word

March 13, 2016

Rev. John F. Koerner

First Presbyterian Church

Clarksburg, WV

Philippians 3:7-14

... but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 3:13-14 N.R.S.V.)

This One Thing I Do

Several years ago I read about a woman who was a master violinist. She was widely recognized as one of the best violinist who ever lived. Someone asks this woman, “What is the secret to your success?”

She replied, “Planned neglect.” She went on to say that she practiced her violin for six hours every day. The only way that she could do that was to deliberately neglect some things that others found important. She neglected her housework. She neglected her yard. She neglected her car. Practicing her violin always came first.

The Apostle Paul has a similar attitude when it comes to serving Christ. Paul had been a respected young pharisee. He had the right family connections to go far in the Jewish world. He was highly educated, and superbly placed for worldly advancement. Yet Paul cast all of that aside as so much garbage. He planned to neglect all of that and move forward in serving Christ.

In verse 13 and 14, Paul writes, “. . . but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Even in Paul’s day and age there were no end of things that he could be doing. So he had to set priorities. “This one thing I do . . .”

Today our children are over scheduled, our adults are over scheduled, our whole society is over scheduled. We have bought into the lie that we can have it all and do it all. The result is burn out and depression. In an attempt to do everything, we end up with nothing.

E. Stanley Jones wrote about the beginning of democracy in India. India is the world’s largest democracy. For their first ever elections they had more than 200 million voters. Many of those people could not read. So they put symbols on the front of the ballot boxes so that even those who could not read would know whom they were voting for. In one particular race there were 12

different candidates, so they put up 12 different boxes. One voter tore his ballot into 12 different pieces and put a piece of his ballot in each of the 12 boxes. What he didn't realize was that in so doing, he didn't vote for anyone.

How many of us never know the deep joy of serving Christ because we are trying to do too much of everything. How many of us are like the man who ran out of his house, jumped on his horse, and rode furiously in all directions?

How many of us miss out on the kind of life God wants to give us because we are riding furiously in all directions?

I could keep on preaching at this moment, but I think it is more important for you to do some prayerful reflection at this point. In your bulletin, you will find a yellow insert. Take some time to reflect and actually write down answers to these questions. I am not going to ask you to turn these in. You can take them home with you.

So first, list your top five priorities.

Then consider, how well does your weekly schedule reflect your priorities?

Last take some time to pray and write down what you hear God saying to you in these scriptures, sermon, and exercise. Then write down what you are going to do in response.

Amen.