

YOUTH SUNDAY WITNESS

by

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(Second Sunday of Lent)



ST. PAUL'S

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Lectionary Texts:

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; and Luke 13:31-35

Philippians 3:17-4:1

¹⁷Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. ¹⁹Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

Luke 13:31-35

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."

³²He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' ³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Six years ago, I stood here and gave the witness address as a 6th grader, and it is still just as nerve racking as a senior in high school. So much has changed in the last

six years, but mainly my perspective on life. Now I know how lucky I am to have the things that I have. Now I know how blessed I am to have a family that loves me and encourages me to do things like give the witness address on Youth Sunday.

Philippians 3:17-4:1 echoes loud and clear on some of the obstacles that I have encountered in my life. Everyone has a choice on how they want to live their lives. Everyone has a path they must follow, and no one can sway you from that choice. Paul states that there are people who choose to go against God and choose to care more about worldly things than God. He also says that people should watch others and see how they choose, and to follow the right example.

I can be a very stubborn person, and prefer to do things my way. My family, though it pains me to say out loud, know more than me. They are very wise and see how certain decisions can affect my entire future if I'm not careful. They want what is best for me, and I am starting to learn that instead of resist it. God wants what is best for his children, but He will not make the choice for them; they have to want to follow the path of Christ, not for him but for themselves.

Sometimes, life can send tornados, hurricanes, and hail to ruin your day. And sometimes, like Jesus, you get a message that you're going to be killed, for reasons unknown and untrue. Sometimes, it's easier to just give up and let others take the power out of your hands and make the decisions for you. I feel that way when life gets so out of control, I feel like there is nothing I can do to stop the chaos and create calm.

In the gospel reading, Jesus is told that he is to be executed. Those around him are in a panic! Terror stricken. But Jesus remains calm and looks at them and says that he has miracles to perform for the next couple of days, so can you come back at a later time? Now...waiting to discuss my inescapable death to perform miracles would not be my first reaction. Actually I would probably find a dark little hole and stay in the fetal position for those few days. But because of who Jesus was, he placed others before him, which is an example that I, myself, need to follow on a regular basis.

When my mother was diagnosed with thyroid cancer, my reaction was completely illogical and disheartening. I avoided her. I avoided talking to her, looking at her, dealing with the whole situation. Not in the selfless way that Jesus did, but in a

selfish way because I was scared and didn't want to face the fact that things could get worse. I wanted to start the grieving process early, I suppose. The day of her surgery, I had a field trip to Perdarnales Falls near Austin. I was completely dead-set on not going on that field trip so I could be there when she got out of surgery. I know, kind of backwards from avoiding all contact with her. But it was something that I thought I needed to do. Unfortunately, I didn't get my stubbornness from thin air. She put her foot down and told me that it was necessary for me to go on this field trip. Because she said that, I felt like my suspicions and fears were confirmed and at that point, I wanted nothing more than to get away. That day was the most miserable day of my young life. At the time I was in 8th grade. It drizzled all day – not enough to drench you, but enough to make your hair frizz up into a mini Afro. But not even the rain or the chilly air could compare to the pain in my heart. Everything was so fuzzy that day, so surreal. I thought for sure I was dreaming. Nothing made sense really. But then I got a text message that said she was OK and out of surgery.

My mom was much stronger than me; I was the one panicking, but it was happening to her. I was the one who lost hope and was too scared to deal with it, even though she was the one suffering. The ones you love the most have the strongest power over your heart in every way. I can't imagine how Jesus managed to keep composure, but then again he was no ordinary human, was he? He was God's son.

Life is a journey. It's about deciding what is important to you and holding onto it. It is about finding yourself, loving who you are, and loving those around you. I strive for those three things every day. I want to be able to be strong when my family needs me, just like Jesus was strong for his people and his disciples. Without want, without need, life becomes even more difficult. I choose my path based on what God has planned for me. When I try to veer off and follow the wrong path, He guides me back in the direction I need to be in. For that, I am so thankful. I am thankful for the time that I have, the loved ones that God has placed in my life, and the opportunities that have been given to me. Jesus wasted no time with fret, worry, or fear – even when he saw the end coming. Why should we waste our valuable minutes with those around us, worrying about tomorrow and being fearful of the future?