

Sunday's Sermon

GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH

250 Fox Hill Road ■ Hampton, Virginia 23669

October 7, 2018

The Rev. Dr. Phyllis B. Milton

Fearless Living
Ephesians 3:14-21

May the God of all mercy enfold us in His love, fill us with His peace, and strengthen us with His grace. Amen.

“God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently working within us.” (The Voice)

The verse from Ephesians that I have just read will be our focus for today and for the next few Sundays. The theme of our Stewardship emphasis is “Fearless Generosity” and how it works itself out in our lives through “Fearless Living,” “Fearless Serving,” “Fearless Giving,” and “Fearless Sowing.”

A song by William McDowell captures the essence of “Fearless Generosity” as it applies to “Fearless Living.”

***I give myself away,
So, You (Lord), can use me.
Here I am, Here I stand,
My life is in Your hands.
Lord, I'm longing to see,
Your desires revealed in me.
I give myself away,
So, You (Lord), can use me.***

In this third chapter of Ephesians, Paul is writing to the church of Ephesus, but in reality, he is writing to the community of believers in all of time who would eventually read this letter. He allows us to listen in on his heartfelt conversation with God about those who claim the name of Christ.

Paul felt that the community of believers were worth praying for. He prays that these followers of Christ be infused with the Spirit of God; to be strengthened, to be filled with courage, to become bold and brave in living out their faith.

He wants them to truly understand the depth of the love of God through Jesus Christ that is the foundation from which they can be fearless. Not an outward facade that can be put on and off at will like a mask, but an inward confidence that is almost like an involuntary muscle movement, a spontaneous burst of confidence that is not generated of our own will, but prompted by the Holy Spirit living within us, emanating from the inside out.

Because He *is* at work within us, we *can* accomplish more than we can ever envision. I know that sounds awesome, but how many of us really believe it?

We are one faith community with God as our Father. And like a parent teaching their child to ride a bike, God has equipped us with all we need to begin this adventure on our own; He is there beside us as our guide, supporter and cheerleader.

God has named us his children; that is our identity that we are to claim and to present to the world.

Paul is praying that God would give us power. That dynamite power that has the *possibility* of becoming a real force in our lives. God's "dunamis" power that has the *potential* to enable us to do things we could not imagine that we could do.

I bet that you are thinking about accomplishing "big" things. Yep, things like living a life that reflects the love of Christ, that's a big thing. The kind of love that centers on giving rather than getting.

***"Take my heart, Take my life,
As a living sacrifice.
All my dreams, all my plans,
Lord, I place them in your hands.
I give myself away,
So, You (Lord), can use me.***

We are filled with God's power, not just for our satisfaction and contentment, but we are gifted with boldness and courage for the sake of the world.

It has been said that "God has instilled in us a characteristic, an instinct, a drive that when coupled with the desire to exert a dramatic influence on life, can produce tremendous results. That characteristic, that instinct, that urge originated in God...it is a part of God's very nature. That characteristic is the generous image of God. Generosity is a part of God. Therefore, generosity is a part of us; generosity is a part of our nature."

So, I have a question for you. As the kids would say, I want you to think about being 100 for God, to step out of your comfort zone and be all in for God. If

you were to be 100 for God, how would you live your life outside the walls of this church?

Maybe something you have been hesitant to do? What service would you want to provide for the community? Part of our vision statement shouts that we are building community.

What witness to the love of Christ would you want the community of Fox Hill to see? How would you be an example of “Fearless Generosity” through your “Fearless Living?”

Think about it for a little bit. What could God do through us outside the walls of Gloria Dei. Don't be shy in your thinking. That is how “vision” begins. What does it look like to be the church in today's society? Now take a few minutes and turn to the person sitting beside you and share with each other what “Fearless Living” would look like for you.

When we recognize a need and courageously take the step of faith to see that vision, to see God's mission through our ministry, it can become reality.

Fearless Living is all about how we respond in word and deed to God's generous gift of grace in Jesus Christ. God's generosity is certainly not limited by our lack of ability to ask, nor to understand how He works. The ELCA proclaims it loud and clear, “His Work, Our Hands.”

God's generous love for us is the foundation, the platform from which we can confidently give our lives away to others.

Bill Monroe had on a T-Shirt on Wednesday night that was most appropriate for our theme today. It read, “Never underestimate the power of giving, it shines like a beacon throughout humanity and brightens the lives of all it touches.”

***My life is not my own,
To you, Lord, I belong
I give myself away,
So, You (Lord), can use me.***

Generosity is in our nature. Like Father, like children.

Amen.