

His Banner Over Me is Love

I had a message that I thought God wanted me to share with your church. I liked it anyways... it was funny, but the closer the time came for me to come here and speak, the more I became uncomfortable with it, and the more I felt like God was speaking to me – telling me, “No, I have something else in mind.” The resounding message that continued to repeat in my mind is: tell them what I did for you through them. In other words, God wants me to share with you how He has moved in my life AND more specifically, how He has moved in my life through this church and the people within. So, I guess I will do just that.

When I came here, I was completely broken, deeply hurt, afraid, alone (or at least it felt that way), damaged, unforgiving, bitter, and I felt completely unloved. Without going into personal details, I had spent the last 20 + years involved in what I thought was Christianity, but what I now know was just plain legalism. I used up all my own energy trying to be a ‘good’ wife and mother, trying to take care of everybody else, and trying to be the picture perfect Christian woman. Well, I failed – (and I probably should have mentioned this before I started preaching, but no heckling from this side of the room over here) and like everything else that I do – I failed in grand fashion.

Then I came here, and God bless Tracy for inviting me.

John 13:35 says: By this, everyone will know you are my disciples if you love one another. If you what? How do people know you are His disciples? I am here to tell you, that you completely fulfill this scripture. The award you won last year validates that. There are other people here and many people in the community who are in agreement with me. And, I am here to tell you today that God is going to honor this church body for this very reason. Now wait, did you hear me? I am not saying this of my own accord. This was pressed down upon me while I was driving, it was whispered in my ear while I was sleeping, and it was 'spoken' to me through scripture. This is important. God is telling you – He is going to honor this church body because of the love. The spirit of love is resting on and in this church and its people. THE SPIRIT OF LOVE IS RESTING ON AND IN THIS CHURCH AND ITS PEOPLE. Can I get an amen

So, in obedience to God, let me tell you what you have done for me, and I include the Methodist churches and people that I have met in Lay Ministry:

First: You have taught me what a Godly man looks like and you made me feel safe. The first time I came to Bible study here, I sat between Pastor Arnie and Lennie and we held hands to pray. I had the most difficult time trying to conceal

that I was having a panic attack. I was horribly afraid of men due to traumatic experiences in my marriage. I was taught that women had a place and it was taking care of the home and the children. I was convinced that women were second-class citizens and should not be teaching men anything, let alone preaching to them. But, you men here, you were so kind, so gentle, so supporting to me, and your wives are so happy. It was like God was opening my eyes and telling me: this is the way it's supposed to be. Let me give you an illustration of how traumatized I was. When Doug or Mr. Rich came to the house to make a repair, Miss Marge or Tracy always came along with them so I wouldn't be alone with them and be afraid. Now who could be afraid of Mr. Rich or Doug? I could joke around about that now, but we all know they have hearts of gold.

Matt 12:35 says: The good man, from his inner good treasure flings forth good things - flings! They just fly out of him.

Prov 12:2 A good man obtains favor from the Lord

Luke 6:45 A good man brings good things out of the good stored in his heart

Without your examples – all of you – and Pastor Arnie – especially you – I would not have known what to look for or expect in a husband, but because of

you – all of you – I have been blessed with a man who is like you: loving, kind, caring, and dedicated to the Lord - a man I can respect.

Second: I have learned that I have a family and a pastor I can count on. You know, every crazy idea I came up with, pastor pretty much said, “Let’s run with it!” Game night, yoga, painting party, Bible study, movie nights... He even agreed to be unofficial pastor for my women’s ministry in the event we ever had some theological question that was outside of my comfort zone or my base of knowledge. Now, some of you won’t know this, but let me toot Arnie’s horn. He has attended so many excursions with my little women’s ministry. Last year, he took us to a movie, and I am still hearing about it. Some of you saw the pictures from the selfie-stick that was bought on our outing. The ladies and I feel very welcome here. We feel like part of your family. I have brought so many ladies to different functions that you have had, and they all feel comfortable, welcome, and warm – and of course they all think the world of Pastor Arnie- as do I.

Heb 13:1 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters

2 Thess 3:13 As for you brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.

1 Cor 11:33 (Especially for you, Miss Bonnie) So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you shall all eat together!

We got that one down pat, don't we?

Thirdly, you have taught me how to let go of my need for retribution, totally trust God with it, and to forgive. I don't want to share a lot of personal information here, but I do want to tell you how much I appreciated the personal experiences that my brothers and sisters here have shared with me. They have shown me how God taught them to forgive, and how they learned to trust Him, and even better – I have seen the results of forgiveness in the fruits of your lives.

Titus 2:7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned.

Well done. Point taken.

We are, here at Calvary, soon to reap what's been sown. Are you ready? What? Are you ready? Are you ready to reap what has been sown? You have sown love – and so you shall receive it in return. Thus saith the Lord. I don't know what God means when He impresses this upon me, but I do know I am excited about it. I do know there is soon to be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and I do

know we will be one of the recipients. My question is: what are we going to do with this? Are you excited? I am excited. I can't imagine what God is going to do here. But God has all the wisdom, all the power, all the resources and because we are His children we have complete access. We're bajillionaires because of our Daddy. Our resources are unlimited.

What I ask of you now, is to open your minds to possibilities. Don't limit God. God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to His power that is at work within us – and I am paraphrasing Ephesians 3:20. It's time to dream. It's time to pray. It's time to go to war for the kingdom. It's time to receive God' blessing upon this church and roll with it.

Let me close with a prayer – and if you want to bend your head where you are sitting, come to the altar, stand and lift your hand in agreement, I encourage you to do so because this is the prayer we need to take to heart...