



“CONFESSIONS OF A SPIRITUAL LOSER”

Biblical Text: [Ephesians 1:3-12](#)

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It’s good to be back in the pulpit – but I was ready last Sunday. I give the weather forecasters an * “A” for caution and a * “D” for accuracy. On the other hand, I’m glad *“ice-a-mageddon”* 2017 didn’t make it all the way to Kansas City. *

Don’t worry – I am resisting the impulse to preach last Sunday’s sermon and today’s both this morning. I know Ann is whispering *“thank God.”* And she’s probably right.

The *“storm that wasn’t”* provided a stressful start to the week. I worried about calling off Church - and our new budget year - and the window project - and how our big 75th Anniversary photo would go, delayed by a week. And on and on.

And my stress wasn’t the only stress around. A storm of a different kind happened in our nation’s capital this weekend. * We have a new president, Donald J. Trump. And we are not all of one mind about that in our nation. We aren’t.

Some cheered. And some took to the streets to express other sentiments. But whether you are a fan of our new president or not, he will need our prayers and so will those who feel discounted and left behind at this moment in our history.

We all have choices to make. I love what one staff member at Old Mission posted on Facebook, * *“I choose to speak love, speak life. I choose love over hate. I choose prayer over complaining ... I choose to put my hope and trust in God.”*¹ **I’m with her.**

In a way this new series is all about choices. Of all the choices we will make in this new year, I hope we will re-fuel our spirits and recharge our batteries for 2017.

Why? Because God knows we need it. **At least I do.** I learned a long time ago that *“doing my job”* well as a pastor is not the same as feeling close to God. There are times when I feel like such a * **loser, spiritually speaking.** Does that surprise you?

I wish I could tell you that I always felt, like Paul prayed for in Ephesians 3:19, that I was * *“...filled with all the fullness of God.”* (Ephesians 3:9)² But I haven’t.

I always keep on keeping on, like you do. But there’ve been times when I’ve skated close to the edge of burnout, struggled with family issues too big to handle on my own, and felt dry inside. **And my guess is that I’m not alone in ever feeling that way.**

¹ Michele Bowen, Old Mission Assistant Director of Children’s Ministries, 2017.

² Ephesians 3:14-19, *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, Copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

And it always seems to surprise us, like it did my teenage son when he figured out that you should put fuel in the car before you drive it! I'll spare you the details but it wasn't pretty! **We'll - he's not the only one who has ever tried running on empty.** *

It just doesn't work – for a car – or for your life. But it happens. If you have ever *snapped off* at your kids or spouse and wondered where that came from. You might be **“running on empty.”** If you've ever had a day when everyone else on the road seems like an idiot. You just might be (*say it with me*) **“running on empty.”** If you have ever not wanted to go to work, or school, or Church even though you know you should. You know what's happening? You might be **“running on empty.”**

*It happens to the best of us. But it doesn't have to stay that way. We can re-fuel spiritually. Over the next five weeks I want to share some things that can help us do so. One of them is Doug Fields' little book called **RE-FUEL.** * **I recommend it highly.**

Also, I don't think it's by accident that E is the first Letter of the Book of Ephesians. It is a book supercharged with advice for re-fueling your tank and recharging your spiritual batteries. So, turn with me to the first chapter of the Book of Ephesians.

As you do, I want to tell you what you'll find there and what you won't. You won't find a list of more stuff you need to do to connect and be more *“spiritual.”* **What you will find is a description of who you already are, even if you don't know it!**

So, look at Ephesians 1:3. It says God has **“...blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.”* And, look at verse 4, God has, **“chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world.”* That's way cool! **Long before we ever said yes to Jesus, God chose us!**

Not only that, God has purposed how we will live, verses 5 and 6: **“He destined us for adoption as his children...”* so we could live, *“to the praise of his glorious grace...”*

And verses 7 and 8 tell us that he has given us, **“redemption ... forgiveness ... and the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.”* All because of his great love for us.

Verses 11 and 12 tell us why. *“In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance ... so that we ... might live for the praise of his glory.”*³ That's what God wants for us. To live fully for the praise of his glory. And that's what we want too, isn't it?

And here's the good news. **We can.** Not by trying to become super-star Christians. Not by becoming superman or superwoman, super-mom or super-dad, or super-preacher, or everybody's everything! We already are who God has blessed and made us to be, because of who he is! ***We are children of God, saved by his grace!**

If you want to re-fuel, refresh, re-charge spiritually, start there. And I will too.

³ Op. Cit. Ephesians 1:3-12, *New Revised Standard Version Bible.*

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

God, sometimes in life we just get so busy, so stressed, so distracted that we find ourselves running on empty. We admit it. And we also confess that when we do, we miss out on the full and abundant life you have given to us in Jesus. We get so caught up in all the stuff we're doing that we forget to just stop, be quiet for a minute, and realize we are, because of who you are. We are children of God, saved by his grace!

Remind us that even though we sometimes feel like spiritual losers, in your eyes we never are. We are your beloved children, who you sent your son to redeem, forgive, bless and save. Help us not allow our souls to get disconnected from remembering how much you love us that we run on empty ever again, O Lord!

As we come to the water and renew our baptism this morning, fill us to overflowing from the river of your grace, O God. And may these words be the ones we say with our lips and believe in our hearts. I am a child of God, saved by his grace!

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.