

Straight from the "Hart"

Worship Service from November 21, 2021

Thanksgiving/Reign of Christ the King



Opening Prayer Almighty and everlasting God, on this Thanksgiving, and on this last Sunday of the Christian year, which ends by recognizing the climatic victory of Jesus Christ over all things, we come to give thanks, for we know it your will to restore all things through him, who is your chosen mediator and ruler over all. As we worship today, may we recognize how sin's power has divided hearts and people, and how we may be unified and united under glorious and gentle rule of Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns forever, Amen.

Affirmation of Faith (P – Pastor, C – Congregation)

Remain standing for a Statement of Faith that seems appropriate for Thanksgiving and Reign of Christ the King Sunday.

P: We belong to God, eternal and infinite,

C: Creator of all things and all that is to come.

P: We follow Christ, who comes to us from God, and reveals God to us.

C: He heals people and transforms lives, and calls us to join in his ministry.

P: He was crucified, died, and was raised by God, and reigns over all Creation;

C: and he bids us to die and rise with him in the service of the healing of the world.

P: We live by the Spirit, together with the communion of saints,

C: as members of the Body of Christ, God's holy universal church.

P: We are confident in the forgive-ness of sin, the power of resurrection and the reality of eternal life.

C: In all things it is our desire to follow Christ, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for God's glory. Amen.

Our first hymn emphasizes again why we are thankful for all our reigning God, Son, and Spirit has done for us.

Music *Now Thank We All Our God*

Let's continue to worship with thanksgiving, but in this hymn, it is called "praise" for all he has done.

Music (vv 1,2,3,5) *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*

Bible Reading

The short biography you are about to hear is a transitional story that both captures the conclusion of our fruit of the Spirit series and anticipates the Advent season about longing for home... Listen as Becky tells his story.

Jesus was going through Jericho, ² where a man named Zacchaeus lived. He was in charge of collecting taxes and was very rich. ³⁻⁴ Jesus was heading his way, and Zacchaeus wanted to see what he was like. But Zacchaeus was a short man and could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree. ⁵ When Jesus got there, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down! I want to stay with you today." ⁶ Zacchaeus hurried down and gladly welcomed Jesus. ⁷ Everyone who saw this started grumbling, "This man Zacchaeus is a sinner! And Jesus is going home to eat with him." ⁸ Later that day Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "I will give half of my property to the poor. And I will now pay back four times as much to everyone I have ever cheated." ⁹ Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Today you and your family have been saved, because you are a true son of Abraham. ¹⁰ The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost." (Luke 19:1-10 (CEV))

Theme

If you read between the lines of the story, you heard a man who feeling completely lost from and longing for home. Oh, he was wealthy and probably had a nice building to live in. But if he was a typical tax collector for Rome, he was not only a cheating scoundrel, but he was also ostracized, excluded, considered an outright traitor to his own people, the people of Abraham. In his "social and psychological exile" he sought out Jesus. Did you catch how Jesus invited Zacchaeus to "return" home -- even though it happens to be in the man's own house?

Through Jesus' healing words, Zacchaeus was able to rediscover who he really was, who he used to be, and still was, lost somewhere underneath -- and the transformation to restoration begins -- and it would be no time before the fruit of the Spirit would begin to grow, and in anticipation of what would come out of Zacchaeus because of what Jesus had already done within his heart, Jesus labels him as a son of Abraham -- one of his own people, -- a label he surely hadn't heard for a long time, much less being called a "true" one.

When our kids were young, there was a children's folk singer named Rob Evans, who was better known as the Donut Man. In his way of teaching children, he said

each of us had this empty hole in our hearts that only God could fill. So he and children, through puppets, skits, and / or songs, would teach a Bible story, like the story of Zacchaeus; and then the story came to its resolution and the healing happened, the lesson learned, or whatever the story was about came to a close, and Jesus filled that empty place, this is what he would do: he would take a donut [hold up donut] This is us. See the empty spot that only Jesus can fill?) and when the story was over and everything came to resolution he would take a donut hole and he would stuff it in there, and make us whole people. (And now you are going to be thinking, "I'm hungry" the rest of the service! 😊)



Jesus stood up in a festival and said if anyone is thirsty, they should come and drink him in... If you believe in him, he said, if you believe in Jesus, out of our innermost being shall flow streams of the living water of the Holy Spirit...

Put in simple language, that means if we come to Jesus, he will quench our thirst for God by making us whole -- by pouring out the Spirit to flood us and fill that spiritual place deep down within each of us that only God can fill. (See John 7:37-39a)

And that is why, throughout our life, from beginning to end, we always need and want Jesus to abide with us. Listen as Kathy and Donna play -- Abide with Me.

Special Music *Abide with Me*

Prayers

And with that in mind, (God's abiding with us) let's prepare our heart for prayer by singing a song that speaks of gratitude to God on this Thanksgiving Sunday, through the action of honoring the king on this Reign of Christ the King Sunday.

Prayer Music *You Are My King (Amazing Love)*

I'm forgiven because you were forsaken.

I'm accepted; you were condemned.

I'm alive and well; your Spirit is within me
because you died and rose again.

(Repeat)

Amazing love, how can it be
that you, my King, would die for me?

Amazing love, I know it's true;
it's my joy to honor you.

(Repeat)

in all I do, I honor you.

You are my king. You are my king.
Jesus, you are my king. Jesus, you are my king.
(To beginning, end at "honor you")
CCLI # 2561297

Pastor's Almighty God, today you crown the end of the Christian year with your amazing love, demonstrated by the powerful victory of Jesus over sin and death, and that if we don't get in the way, you rule by treating all people fairly as you guide the nations of the earth. Forgive us when we do get in the way of your will, blocking it within ourselves or for what you want for others. We ask you to once again bless your people in all ways, that we may in turn be a blessing for others and they too will find joy in honoring you as their king.

We praise you for the consistent, unified, harmonious symmetry we see in all of nature, for the beauty of earth and sky and sea, for the never-ending cycles of seedtime and harvest, for your providential care that year by year, sometimes day by day, supplies our need.

The steady, persistent rhythm of the seasons -- ever-changing, yet ever faithfully true in its time -- reminds us of your faithfulness to us in every season of our life - always changing, adapting, doing a new thing, restoring and recreating your Universe -- always dependable, unchanging and unfailing in your promises. We can rely on you.

Intercession This is why today, we continue to pray for * those who are stressed by financial shortfalls, under or unemployment, * for Tim Mann in therapies following a stroke, * for Mark Majeski, recovering from covid caused surgeries, * for the complete and lasting recovery from covid for Pastor Paul Gruenberg, who is now home from the hospital, and for his wife who has been battling covid at home as well, * for Amy's husband Jerrod recovering from brain cancer surgery, * for Warren Bonneville, * for the family and friends of Mike Norman who passed away from covid this past Wednesday, both still trying to recover from the harsh effects of covid. Lord we lift all these up to you, and we know there have been things that have not been said or written, but were in weeks past, or even just in our hearts that have never been said to anybody, but you know what those needs are and we pray that you would undertake. Be the assurance, the strength, the help, the guide, for every situation.

Lord, we anticipate with eager expectation the answers that will you provide in their proper time and season, just as when the time was ripe, you gave your Son

Jesus Christ, and when the time is ripe again, his exaltation and coronation will come to *full* fruition and then every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to your glory that he is Lord of all, and all languages, peoples, and nations will serve him; will always hear his word, will follow his teachings, and live in his Spirit; and we will pray together the prayer Jesus taught us to pray... **Lord's Prayer**

Bible Reading Introduction

We have arrived at the end of the series on releasing the power of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. If we have received Christ, we have received the Spirit. And if we have received the Spirit, (See 1 John 3:9-10) we keep in step with the Spirit. We stop sinning and we grow up into maturity.

In the secular world, we call that well-adjusted, or wholeness. In the spiritual world, we drop the "w" and call it holiness; which means pure; not diluted, fully committed -- and it also means to be set apart. Sometimes we put those ideas together, and it means God has set us apart to be completely his and strive each day to grow purely, exclusively in his ways, in every aspect of our lives. The more successfully we allow God to guide our life, the more we will exhibit his characteristics, and the more we exhibit his characteristics, the more complete and whole, (and holy), we will become.

Responsive Bible Reading (L – Lay Reader, C- Congregation)

L: Do you not know that your body is a [temple] of God where the Holy Spirit lives? God gave you His Holy Spirit. Now you belong to God. You do not belong to yourselves. God bought you with a great price.

C: So honor God with your body. You belong to Him...

L: I do not mean to say that I have got there yet, or that I am perfect yet. But I am trying hard to get there, because that is why Christ saved me. [Beloved], I do not yet think that I have got all the things of Christ. But there is one thing that I am doing.

C: I forget what is behind me and reach out to what is ahead of me.

L: Like a man running a race, I try hard to reach the line so that I will receive the prize. Because we belong to Christ Jesus, God is calling us to receive this prize that he has for us in heaven. All of us who are grown-up Christians should feel this way... God will show you the right way. But no matter how far we have gone, we must keep on going that way.

C: And let us do it together, having the same things in mind.

L: {For} those who belong to Christ Jesus have stopped doing the wrong things

they want to do. They have stopped them just as if they were killed on a cross. And they have even stopped wanting to do them. The Spirit gives us life.

C: [Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.]

L: And so we should do what the Spirit wants us to do.

C: ... these are the things which the Spirit wants you to show: love, joy, peace, patience, [kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control].

1 Cor 6:19-20 (NLV), Phil 3:12-16,
Gal 5:23-24 (WE), [25 NIV], 22a (WE) [22b-23 NIV]

Throughout this series, one of the main premises is cooperating with and being guided in our daily living, our daily walk, our daily steps (if you will); by the Spirit of God, therefore, let's sing this oldie but *goodie* -- *Stepping in the Light*.

Music (vv 1,3,4) *Stepping in the Light*

Trying to walk in the steps of the Savior, Trying to follow our Savior and King;
Shaping our lives by his blessed example, happy, how happy, the songs that we bring.

Refrain

How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior,
Stepping in the light, stepping in the light;
How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior,
Led in paths of light!

Walking in footsteps of gentle forbearance, footsteps of faithfulness, mercy and love;
looking to him for the grace freely promised, happy, how happy, our journey above!
(Refrain)

Trying to walk in the steps of the Savior, Upward, still upward we'll follow our Guide;
When we shall see him, "the King in his beauty" happy, how happy, our place at his side"
(Refrain)

Sermon "Releasing the Power of Holiness"

We've discovered several recurring ideas that were stated or implied as we look back through this worship series together. Today we are going to call them the *characteristics of fruit ripening* and then following that, the *keys to (wholeness) or holiness*. My list is ordered more for flow of thought more than level of importance, so don't think the first or last of the list is necessarily most important, it is just the way the flow works..

First, and some of this you have heard before, and some of it recently, so there is some review in this. That's what you do before a test right? The test is next week!

😊).

First, the fruit of the Spirit has many characteristics -- Paul named 9 of them, you now have that list memorized, this is now the 11th week you've read them out loud. But having said that -- it is a singular fruit -- that's why we had on our altar each week only one kind of fruit in our display -- the tomatoes. (A final thank you to those who provided those each week, and then generously and graciously shared them with us. We appreciate that very much).

**Characteristics of fruit ripening (CFR):
1 one fruit, not pick and choose**

So the first characteristic of fruit ripening is a reminder that this is not "pick and choose". A tomato can't say "I like being red, but I think I'll choose to taste like a red bell pepper." It can't do that, can it? While some traits may be stronger than others, *all* the traits of a tomato will be in a tomato, and as Christians, all the Spirit's character traits are to be growing and developing in our lives, we can't pick ones we want and ignore the ones we don't. But that does not mean we are being trans-



formed into a monotone mold of something we are not. The Spirit does not smother out individuality. Rather, he helps us overcome the distortions in our life caused by the power of sin in us and in our world, and he enhances and brings out the best of our originally created person that we are, and calls us to the best unique purposes that we can fulfill.

CFR: # 2 Each fruit is unique

Therefore, God's mature peace in one person may look different from God's equally mature peace in another person. But everyone who is discerning still recognizes it as God's peace.

All ripe tomatoes do not look alike or have the exact same properties, some are redder or greener, sweeter or tarter, juicer or meatier, or rounder or oval-er, bigger or smaller -- yet we still see recognize each as -- tomatoes. Nor are they all necessarily used for the same function. Some may be eaten as a snack, others sliced into a sandwich, some are stewed for chili or soup, some are squeezed and made into a sauce or condiment or juice, but they all still have a similar purpose - - to add nutrition, flavor and/or texture to our world. And as different and unique as we all are and will continue to be, we are hopefully all recognized as God's children, and are called to fulfill our unique purposes the very best that we can so that we add flavor, and help, and wholeness to our world.

Thirdly, the development of these traits are a natural (but not automatic) outgrowth of the Spirit of God within us. Growth occurs

(CFR): # 3 It is a natural (but not automatic) outgrowth of the Spirit.

by allowing (releasing) control of our lives to the Spirit to guide us in our daily living. A tomato doesn't grow apart from the vine, but only as it cooperates with the natural processes of the plant. As we cooperate with the Spirit's leadership, his traits (love, joy, peace, that whole list...) will be a natural by-product, growing *naturally* within us and naturally flowing out of us. The difference between the tomato and us, is that the tomato automatically follows its genetic design and cooperates with the vine, while we have to choose every day, with every decision, whether we are going to do that or not. Right?

That may be, in a small part, why we have this 4th characteristic of fruit ripening: We do

(CFR): # 4 Different growth rates

not ripen instantly or uniformly. As a result of a variety of factors, then, in one person, God's joy may be but a tiny seed while kindness is matured and growing almost to full bloom; while another person may not know how to contain their bursting joy, but kindness is still waiting for its season of cultivation.

There are also circumstantial nuances. Someone may be one of the most peaceful, patient, people in the world -- until you put him in front of steering wheel. Someone may be the gentlest, anger-free person you know -- until they get tired, or their biorhythms are not clicking right, then watch out. Or someone may be one of the most loving, gentle people you know, until you set them at a computer with their social media page in front of them. This is an illogical part of human nature, or our fallen sinful nature. It tempts us, in certain settings, to revert to a less mature state than what we have normally already obtained. The bottom-line application of this is: Not only do we have variable growth rates within and without, even the same maturity level may look very different in each person, and especially at any given time or in given setting or circumstance. Therefore, (1) do not be prideful of our strengths or beat ourselves up for our weaknesses, (2) nor should we be envious about another's strengths, or critical of another's weaknesses. We all have enough pain to deal with, we don't need to be adding to anyone else's or to our own. We have not enough insight into anyone else's life, personality, or circumstances to tell them how far they should have come by now.

Characteristic of Fruit Ripening # 5: The active process of growing to useful, purposeful perfection

(CFR) # 5 May be painful

might be painful. When I was young and I helped my mom make applesauce, she got out a cone shaped strainer, and cone shaped wooden instrument, and some of you probably know exactly what I am talking about. We put the apples in, and we smooshed them, and ground them, and pressed them through a bunch of little holes in that strainer — then she cooked and steamed and bottled them — It is not easy to change. But you cannot become a sweet pie until you do!

I suppose I should have talked about canning tomatoes -- but I don't remember doing that particular item... But as we look back over our lives, we will discover that most often, what shaped us and grew us most were not the times when life allowed us to easily coast with few obstacles or pressures or challenges. We certainly need those times of respite and re-energizing, and they are a part of the cycle of growth, but it is usually (not always, but usually) in the times of -- "straining" -- that we see new patterns of growth and transformation -- as we look back -- it is not always easy to see in the midst of it. All we feel is the strain.

But as each of us cooperates with God's growing and his process to perfected purpose in us, we add a unique flavor to our world that only each one of us can give. That is the 6th characteristic of fruit ripening -- we flavor our world.

CFR #6 Flavors the world

And finally of the characteristics... Developing, processing, cooking, storing, mixing, and flavoring our world with our Spirit-fruited lives requires a willingness on our part to grow and develop -- and that means: a willingness change. But most of us are comfortable living in familiar patterns — and that is true even when our lives are dysfunctional and unhappy. It defies logic, but for many people, it is easier (and they think, better) to suffer in the known than to risk the unknown for new patterns.

CFR # 7 Requires change

The story is that Will Rogers went to his friend Eddie Cantor for advice. Do you remember them? He wanted to make some important changes in his act-- but was worried about the danger of such changes. Cantor's response to him was, "Why not go out on a limb? That's where the fruit is".

And so it is with the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It may fly against the norms of the world and against our own natural tendencies. But being restricted by our own bad habits is like tying our hands behind our back, while exercising the fruit of the Spirit leads us to a life of freedom. We didn't read that verse in Galatians today, but it is still there. Against, the holy, the whole, the mature, the fruitful Christian life, there is no law. I know it is said, but it should not be said. "Hey, stop being so nice -- you are

over the maximum limit of kindness allowed.” People say it – not the last part, but the first part. But there is no law against kindness, and there is no limit to how much we should be sharing – the same with love, joy peace, patience... there are no limits. No law against it. Law teaches us what is wrong, grace empowers us to conquer (to crucify) what is wrong within us; which in turn leads to a life of freedom and victory.

So on a practical level, what are just some things that we can do more effectively receive and release God’s active grace in our lives?

Keys to holiness (wholeness) (KtH(W))
*** Take care of yourself**

Take care of yourselves. Self-care is very popular these days, and some use it for an excuse to ignore proper responsibilities. But we’ll just set that aside and pretend that is not there for today. We’ll just talk about proper self-care.

We make a big deal about compartmentalizing. Our physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual – we like to keep them all in their little separate categories, as well as our job life, social life, all those different areas of our life – we like to keep them all in separate categories too. But they all intermingle. You cannot box off your life into compartments, and you can’t box off your brain from your heart. Your emotions from your social life. They *all* intermingle. So as one suffers, so do all the others. It is no wonder that Paul told the Corinthians that "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Honor God in your body." (1 Cor 6:19)

Take care of yourself, not just your physical body, but the whole body of your life that makes up who you are. As I’ve already hinted, an exhausted person does not think as clearly, social skills diminish, emotions are heightened. That mixed bag crosses over into all the different “compartments” of our living. As much as we may not want it to, our job life, our personal life, our spiritual life, our recreational life, our learning life, our family life, and the list could go on forever ... they all spill over into each other. If I have a bad day at work, I may not enjoy bowling as much that night. Or, if I have a bad night of bowling, I may not enjoy work as much the next day. They flow together.

A long time ago I preached this topic and I said something like, manage your time, eat right, sleep right, exercise, do those things that are important. The congregation laughed. Some young whippersnapper telling them to take care of themselves in a world that honors being too busy to turn around, that sees a lack of time and exhaustion as the proofs - the crowning badges -- that we wear to feel

important and earn respectability. Now that I am older, I know why they laughed. It is really hard to take care of yourself, with all of the pressures of life, and it is really hard to not fall into the “I’m so busy badge” trap, too. It is still really important that we do those things, but it is really hard!

Focus on proper self-care. Then focus on attitude.

KtH(W) * Focus on attitude

Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind. A person grows old not by the passing of years but by exchanging idealism for cynicism, courage for timidity, adventure for comfort, enthusiasm for pessimism. A youthful spirit is broken when it *surrenders* to anxiety and self-doubt. (Not when it feels them, but when it surrenders to them). Someone said, Years may wrinkle the skin, but it is apathy that wrinkles the soul. Remember Paul’s advice to the Philippians: Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, pure, lovely, admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think on, dwell on, meditate on, such things. (Phil 4:4:9 (esp. 8-9)

I told one church board to expect a full house each Sunday. For that particular church in that setting, it was not a far-flung stretch of the imagination. But again, the response was laughter. Maintaining, or almost maintaining the status quo, is relatively comfortable for us. That is why we all hear that phrase so often, “Yeah, that’s just the way the church --- or he -- or she -- or I -- am.” There is an expectation of sameness, not of betterment. Once we get beyond the wee years of, say, 6 years old, we think we - and others - are pretty much fixed -- hard wired into being a certain way. Don’t believe it. But reasonable and realistic growth does mean divesting ourselves of what hinders and investing ourselves in our purposes — whether in the corporate life of God’s people, or the personal development of our soul, and every other area of our life.

Believe this instead: not that we are “fixed”, but that empowered by the Spirit within us, and with our cooperative permission with him, God can move us and change us; and believe too, that the change will be worth the investment involved, which leads to the next key to holiness and wholeness.

While focus on proper self-care and focus on attitude is critical, we need move to beyond mental

KtH(W) * Focus on action

actions, and do something, Focus on action. I heard a radio speaker once say: There is a difference between a person who wishes for something and a person who really wants something. Lots of people wish they were in good shape, wish

they had a lot of money, wish this and that --- only a few want it enough to accept the responsibility to do something about it.

A side benefit to focusing on action is this: The person who rows the boat doesn't usually have time to rock it. Wesley put it this way: "Keep yourself so busy doing the good, you have no time to do anything bad." Dreaming and thinking is a good start, but we also need to get on with actually living it out.

Self-care, attitude, action, then focus on relationships. Don't be consumed with the past, what others have done to you, what failures you have had, the revenge and the anger and the stress that can so easily build up inside us. Nor should we be *consumed* with issues, tasks, possessions. Rather, we should focus on others and work to build good relationships.

KtH(W) * Focus on building people

All people need to find the affirmation that we find in Christ. Accept and love people, regardless of the task, action, consequences. Build bridges, not relational walls and barriers. Just as Christ showed us. I can't think of a single wall he put up to a single person. When we think about others many normally separate from, think: who knows where we'd be if we had to live in their shoes and experienced their setbacks. As the saying goes. "But for the grace of God, that could be me..."

Then, focus on God. Rejoice in the Lord, in his presence, abide in him, listen to him, pray to him, have faith in him. Not that doing these things will immediately and automatically make us perfectly mature in all ways. But as he comes to us in his fullness, release control to him and he will help us.

KtH(W) * Focus on God

One way I like to look at this is the automobile. Anyone have a car here? All right, then maybe you can understand this. all the potential power resides within that car's engine. More engine is not necessary. But that power is contained and controlled by how heavily we push on one – *one* pedal. The more we open up --- the throttle, the gas pedal, the more power we release to move the car along. If God is the engine, and we are the car, then the pedal is our level of cooperation. How much will we release God's power into our life?

It is a big question, because sometimes, this is what happens. There was a time I got a phone call and needed to pull someone out of a ditch. I grabbed some chains and took my Dad's '73 Bronco -- powerful engine, powerful 4 wheel drive traction, good tires, powerful pulling power. When I arrived on the scene there really wasn't much of a ditch, there weren't any obstacles, the snow was just deep

enough in the field that that car had slid into, that that light-weight two-wheel drive car couldn't make much headway, even with its powerful engine. This should be very easy to get back on the road I thought as I hooked up the chain. Which is why I became really confused when after multiple attempts to ease the car forward, not only did the car not move, its spinning tires just dug the car deeper and deeper into the snow and muddy ground beneath creating ruts. Every time I started we get this weaving back and forth going, like a tug of war with the chain between us. Well, after some puzzling and confusing conversation between us, I finally discovered that while I was trying to chain pull the car forward, the driver of the car at the same time was attempting to *back* the car out of its stuck spot -- so the more gas I gave to pull it forward, the more gas the driver gave to move it backwards, ending in a relative rocking, swerving stalemate. Once I got the driver to realize they were supposed to go forward and not backward, the car moved so easily I couldn't even feel the drag of the chain.

When we invite God into our life, we receive ALL of the Spirit with all of his regenerating, resurrecting, transforming power, with all his lifting and pulling chains that can unstuck us, which leads to the last key to holiness and wholeness.

Growth sometimes requires the risk of stretching beyond our comfort zones. The driver of the car, in spite of the powerful towing truck chained in

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| <p>KtH(W) * Risk stretching beyond your comfort zones</p> |
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front of it, looked at the circumstances of the snow and position off the road and decided the most logical and comfortable route was not forward, but backward, and that is why they put the car in reverse and stepped on the gas creating the tug of war.

I wonder how often we call on God to pull us out, to grow us forward, but we look at our circumstances and look at his life chain to us, and as he pulls us forward, we stand on the brake, or even push on the gas pedal with the shifter in reverse, thinking we know a better way, and we are reluctant to take a chance.

How much of His power are we going to release in our lives? How much are we willing to cooperate with his leadership? Unlike the car, which when given full release of power may careen dangerously out of control; when we give God complete control of our lives, allowing His power to take over does not throw our lives out of whack, but brings our life into its best potentials. It is God who gives us -- possibilities.

Theodore Roosevelt said, It is not the critic who counts, not the person who points out where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the person who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes up short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasm, the devotions, and spends himself or herself in a worthy cause; who at the worst, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his or her place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.

I wasn't planning on saying this, but I was watching TV the other day, late – it must have been Sunday night because it was after the Sunday night game, which I didn't watch, but I turned it on to see what the score was. And they have this new segment which has that rapper Snoop Dogg, and they'd show the worst play of the week and say these players were "in the doghouse". And I was thinking, I'd like to see you get out there and do it!" Rather than making fun of athletes who are trying to do their best in bad situations.

God has planted the deposit of his Spirit within us (2 Cor 1:21-22) to be nurtured, developed, fertilized as he grows us to completion. Allow him to farm your soul, weed out the bad, prune the fruitless things in your life, and help you to blossom into what He has called and designed you to be. Give him complete control, and see how easily he can move you forward. He won't even feel the tug... ☺

For the promise is that he is faithful, and powerful, and "the one who began a good work in you will thoroughly complete it by the day of King Jesus." (Phil 1:6b (NTE)) But he will not do it unless you allow him to. He does not force himself on you. Are you willing to risk getting into the arena? Can you go out on a limb to risk and change and growth? Risk failure? To get up when we fail? To keep on going anyway? in whatever area of life God may be speaking to you about... Fully rely on him. Give yourself completely to him. Surrender yourself to him... and then see what he can do in you...

Prayer Let's pray. Lord, we tether ourselves to your saving arms. Forgive us when we spin and dig in, fighting against your will and your ways. Help us to cooperate and move with you, not against you -- as the hymnwriter penned the lyrics so long ago -- All for Jesus, all my thoughts and doings, all my days and all my hours, let my hands perform his bidding, let my feet run in his ways, let my eyes see Jesus only, let my lips speak forth his praise, worldlings prize their gems and beauty, cling to gilded toys of dust, boast of wealth and fame and pleasure, -- only Jesus will I

trust. Eyes fixed on Jesus, enchained by a vision of the crucified, what wonder! How amazing! Jesus glorious King of kings -- calls me beloved, and lets me rest beneath his wings. Amen. (All for Jesus by Mary D James 19th c.)

Let's stand for our final song and sing I surrender all, we'll sing the refrain only after the 1st and last verse.

Music (vv 1,3,4,5 Ref after 1,5 only) *I Surrender All*

Blessing Now reminded of His powerful grace and faithfulness to work his mighty power within us, resolve to go blessed and renewed by the Holy Spirit, prepared to cooperate with His will for your lives so that our lives will be instrumental in transforming and renewing the earth. Amen.