

EVERY DAY IS A GIFT
May 12, 2013 –Mothers' Day –2 Corinthians 12: 1-10
The Church of the Covenant

No one ever likes their sermon quoted back at them. One of the delightful things about growing up is that we remember the “sermons” preached to us by our Mothers and repeat them back to them. I tend now to say to my parents –“Now you need to do this; let’s plan to do that; I’d like you to consider doing this...” And my dear sweet Mother will say to me, “Gee, you’re awfully bossy!” To which I will respond, “I learned from an expert!” I was excellent in law school in cross examination because I learned that skill from my Mother. And I developed skill in preaching in seminary because of all the “sermons” preached to me by my Mother over the years. But one of the things my Mother has taught me with her life is that “Every Day is a Gift”. So in a way this is me quoting back to my Mother a sermon she oft times preached to me.

At my parent’s place down in Hilton Head they had a plaque over their bed and it read “Every Day is a Gift”. When they sold their place two summers ago and moved from a place of many, multiple and happy memories over 27 years my Mother was inclined to just leave everything behind. Everything was left behind from the Bible to the sign over their bed. But I asked one of their friends there to go into the unit and retrieve the sign that had “Every Day is a Gift” on it and to surreptitiously send it up North. Some things you don’t leave behind and one of them is the fact that every day is a gift. Things change. Life changes. There is loss and gain; the thrill of victory and the agony of the small defeats in life. Health changes –but every day remains a gift. That’s what my Mother has taught me.

Our scripture is about this I believe. It is the Apostle Paul sharing about a “thorn in the flesh” (some think it a besetting sin harassing the Apostle; some think it is a physical malady that plagued the Apostle). But the Apostle comes before the Lord and asks three times for this thorn to be removed from him. But it is not. For whatever reason the Lord God Almighty, who loves the Apostle Paul with a passionate and never-ending love, chooses, out of mercy and a divine plan, not to remove this thorn in the flesh of his beloved Paul. And if out of a Sovereign plan of a Sovereign and all-loving God, the Lord does not choose to answer even the Apostle Paul the way the Apostle wants and requests, how so it is also the case for us in our life. Sometimes we pray and we get an immediate answer; sometimes we pray and we get an answer a long time from when we begin praying; sometimes we pray and the answer comes back, ‘no’. If it is so for the Apostle, it is also so for us sometimes.

The scripture goes on to note that the Lord speaks back to Paul these words: *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”* It is in quotation marks in the scripture so we may assume that quite literally these are the words spoken by God directly to Paul. God says, “I am answering your prayer another way, Paul, because *MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT* for you; *“my power is made perfect in weakness.”* (2 Corinthians 12: 9) Of course, the Greek word translated “grace” here means “GIFT”. God is saying to Paul –My Gift is sufficient for you. It is grace sufficient for the day that I give. Every day is filled with GRACE. Every day is filled with GIFTS from God’s Almighty hand. Every Day is a Gift.

I think sometimes as a Christian we think that as a Christian everything will go perfectly for us. Like receiving Christ into our heart is some “lucky charm” or amulet that wards away evil. So when something happens to us that is bad, and we pray and pray about it, then we may even assume that we have done something wrong, that we are bad and unworthy of God’s answer in our life. But I think then we are missing the bigger picture. God doesn’t promise us that everything will be perfect, that we will

not have trials and temptations, bad days as well as good days, or that we will have good health always. No, what God promises us in Jesus Christ is to walk through those bad days with us, to *'never leave us nor forsake us'*, to give us a grace sufficient for the day, to give us enough GRACE to get us through whatever we face in life. *"MY grace is sufficient for you..."* says the Lord. My gift to you is enough. The gift I give you will get you through. Every day is filled with the gifts I give you, says the Lord. Every Day is a Gift.

I think we can also rob ourselves of today by refusing to see the gifts God is sending our way, regardless of the particular circumstances we find ourselves in. By focusing on the problem or the issue; by dwelling too much on the health issue or the family problem, by focusing our heart on the things which get us down, we are losing today, we are forfeiting tomorrow, we are robbing ourselves of the gifts of grace that God seeks to give us, even and especially in the midst of hardships and loss and health concerns and everything that happens to us in life. By focusing on the negative we lose today. By focusing on what we may not be able to change and is getting us down, we cannot see the grace God is trying to send our way. By focusing on the prayer that is not answered we rob ourselves of the truth that indeed every day, even the worst day, is a Gift from God. We lose the giftedness of the day because we cannot see the grace that is sufficient that God is giving in order to make Every Day a Gift for us. Don't shorten your life and rob it of its joy by seeing any day, no matter how difficult, as anything less than a gift.

So the plaque with the words, "Every Day is a Gift", was just sitting in the corner of my parents' bedroom for several months. And one day we decided to put it up over their bed in their bedroom up North. And my Mother wakes up every morning, and as she says, sees written upside down her sermon to me –"Every Day is a Gift." Now we have a funny thing we do in our family. When someone is kvetching around about something a little too much we look them in the eye and say, "Every Day is a Gift." When they keep kvetching around we grit our teeth and say it with more force, "No, every day is a gift.", as in, let's get back to remembering that today is a gift. It is a gift to be with our family. It is a gift to be with those we love. The worst day is still a gift. The hardest day is still a gift. Let's really appreciate the day and realize that it is a gift from God's almighty hand. Let's not take one iota away from it. Let's not diminish it; let's not rob ourselves of today or tomorrow, but let's cherish the moment as it is –a gift of grace from God's Almighty hand.

About ten years ago my Mother gave me a copy of a poem entitled "TODAY" that is emblematic of living our lives as if indeed every day is a gift...It is posted on my refrigerator to remind me of her sermon...

*Lord, thank you for another day
Within this life of mine,
Give me the strength to live it well,
Whatever I may find.
Bestow from your abundance
Whatever I may lack,
To use the hours wisely
For I cannot have them back.*

*Lord, thank you for another day
In which to make amends,
For little slights or petty words,
Inflicted on my friends.*

*For sometimes losing patience
With problems that I find;
For seeing faults in others' lives,
But not the ones in mine.*

*Lord, thank you for another chance,
In which to try to be,
A little more deserving
Of the gifts you've given me.
For yesterday is over,
And tomorrow's far away,
And I remain committed to
The good I do today. Amen.*

"My grace is sufficient for you", says the Lord, "for my power is made perfect in weakness." Every Day IS a Gift. On this Mother's Day that's the sermon my Mother always preached to me. And Amen.

**By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!**