

GOD LOVES LAWYERS ALSO
Installation Service of Emily I. Miller as Associate Pastor
October 27, 2013 3:00 p.m. Luke 11: 42-54
The Church of the Covenant

Emily, we stand in a long line of great lawyers who became even better ministers. I am legally trained, never practiced law, but felt called to go into ministry. Emily is legally trained, practiced law, but felt called to be a minister. John Calvin, the intellectual forbear of the Presbyterian Church started life legally trained but became a chief reformer in the Protestant Reformation, author of *The Institutes*, an expositor of scripture *par excellence*. The great revivalist of the 1800's, Charles Finney, was a lawyer long before he became a preacher. Indeed, the Apostle Paul began life legally trained, was a "Pharisee of the Pharisees", a lawyer of lawyers, and became the chief articulator of the doctrine of GRACE and the spreader of the faith, the Apostle to the Gentiles. The churches I have been blessed to serve over time have been packed with Christ-centered, godly attorneys; articulate men and women who have used their considerable giftedness for the Kingdom. Emily, you stand in a long line of lawyers who became ministers and have served the Lord. It is obvious from this that GOD LOVES LAWYERS ALSO...

I remember my first year of law school and one of my first classes, Property. It was taught by Professor Dodd and he spent the first 6 weeks meticulously going over just one case; I shall remember it forever, *Pierson vs. Post*. The case centered around who owned a wild animal, the one who owned the property on which it was captured or the one who actually possessed it. The case held that the man who caught a wild silver fox of the property of another was the actual owner of the silver fox, possession being 9/10s of the law. And Professor Dodd would call on only one person for the entire class, peppering them with question after question for an hour, wearing them down, methodically, step by step. The particular class in question I had prepared for but I had read only the note cases of the section we were likely to cover, not as I should have, read the note cases of the note cases of *Pierson vs. Post*. I was about to have my comeuppance. "Mr. Broberg..." professor Dodd intoned in a voice as if it was coming from a sepulcher. And I knew in that moment that the jig was up. He cited a hypothetical situation about a man who captured a wild African Elephant in New York City's Central Park that was owned by Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus and the man citing *Pierson vs. Post* claimed that he, and not the circus, was the owner of the Elephant. "So, Mr. Broberg, how would you argue?" And I said I would argue in favor of *Pierson vs. Post* and the man who caught the African Elephant in Central Park. I had fallen into the wily "Silver Fox's" trap! (Professor Dodd's nickname was "the silver fox" for the fox in *Pierson vs. Post*.) So he began his HOUR LONG, relentless questioning of me by asking: "Mr. Broberg, have you ever been in Central Park in New York City?" Yes, I have, professor. "And how many wild African Elephants did you see roaming about Central Park?" None, professor Dodd. And the questioning, shall I say, went downhill from there –much to the total amusement of all my fellow classmates. For, you see, had I read one of the notecases of the notecases I would have known that his hypothetical wasn't a hypothetical at all. "Be prepared" is not only the motto of the Boy Scouts; it's what every good lawyer knows...and professor Dodd sought to teach me, albeit at my expense and to the joy of my classmates...

The law is by nature adversarial and confrontational. But Christianity is cooperative and relational. The law declares that what is true is whatever a judge or jury declares to be true on any given day. But Christianity says that truth is personal in the person of Jesus Christ; He who is the WAY and the TRUTH and the LIFE. The law is about "getting it right"; it is about preparation, skill and ability of the advocate. Christianity is knowing that apart from God we will NEVER get it right and that we need a Savior in the Lord Jesus Christ, who got it right for us. The law has us stand before a judge or a jury. Christianity has

us stand before the Judgment Seat, where the Judge, Jesus, is also our Advocate, our attorney, and is also the one who has already paid the price for our crime. The law is tough and exacting, a stern mistress; Christianity is about grace, forgiveness and redemption. The law is about punishment and accountability. Christianity is about restoration and a second chance. The law is about a moral exactitude, a perfect obedience to a perfectly stern and unrelenting law; Christianity is about GRACE. Emily, when God called you to be a minister, God called you be a different kind of advocate --exchanging one kind of advocacy for another. And now, praise God, your client is always innocent, because your client is the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. He is the One who has paid your retainer through His precious blood and HE is the one who has issued the terms of your call.

When I was in law school I was reading this particular piece of scripture we just read from Luke. *"Woe to you lawyers also!" (Luke 11: 46)* Shall I say it really grabbed my attention. It made me sit up and take notice. The passage concludes that the lawyers and Pharisees didn't like being intellectually bested by Jesus, they didn't like HIM pointing out their own flaws (nobody does!). So their response to Jesus was not to name Him as Lord. It was, as it says, to *"press Him hard"* and to *"provoke Him to speak of many things"*, and to seek to set a trap for Jesus, to ensnare him like a silver fox in His own words, to beat and best Jesus intellectually and in argumentation, to have a "gotcha moment". It says, *"to catch at something he might say."* (Luke 11: 53, 54) Instead of seeing Jesus as Messiah and the Son of God, they saw Him as someone to beat and best at His own game. How like a lawyer. Emily, that's what we were trained to do.

So a lawyer asks Jesus a question --*"Who is my neighbor?"* And we receive from Jesus the story of the Good Samaritan. "Who is the neighbor?" then asks Jesus of the lawyer. The lawyer responds: "The one who showed mercy." (The very thing the lawyer began the exchange by NOT showing Jesus). So a lawyer asks Jesus, *"What is the greatest commandment in the law?"* And Jesus responds with His elegant and brilliant summation of the entire law and prophets, in the two tablets of the law --*"You shall love the Lord your God...and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."* And the lawyer must have fallen over in amazement--for Jesus' summation was the very nub of the issue --exactly what lawyers are taught to do, Jesus did better than any lawyer could do. A lawyer asks Jesus --*"Should we pay taxes to Caesar or not?"* seeking to trap Jesus in his words. Jesus says, pay to Caesar what is his due, but pay to God, your entire life, Mr. Lawyer. "Pay to Caesar what is Caesar's; pay to God what is God's." The lawyers were not about to best the WISDOM of God who is and was Jesus Christ. But the other difference was this --the lawyers tried to entrap Jesus because they hated HIM. But Jesus tried to illumine the lawyers because HE loved them. He was tough on them, not because He hated them. And God Loves Lawyers also...

The Apostle Paul, perhaps the most brilliant lawyer who ever lived, was traveling along the road to Damascus. He had lent his considerable intellect to the eradication of a new, in his mind, heretical sect called Christianity. Christianity was a threat to all he believed in --in his view it undermined the law, the traditions of Israel, and it provoked such an intense hatred within him that he persecuted the early church, indeed, was responsible for the death of one of the early martyrs of the church, the saintly Stephen. Great intellect in service to zealotry results in cruelty, pain and evil, regardless that its intent is to serve God righteously. The lawyer of lawyers thought he had it perfectly right, had figured it all out perfectly, but he was to learn on the Damascus Road that he had it all upside down --that who he was persecuting was God, not the heretics, and what he was doing was evil, not good. Christianity is the use of our intellect and our skills and our debating ability and our gifts in service and surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Love. Our Lord is Jesus; the end is LOVE; the means is GRACE. And that is what the lawyer of lawyers experienced on the Damascus Road. He deserved punishment under the law; but

what Paul received was grace through the very One he was persecuting, Jesus Christ. So the soon-to-be Apostle goes out into the wilderness to figure this all out. He goes out into Arabia for three years (I always feel it is ironic that it is the same three years we spend in law school and it is the same three years we spend in seminary!). And from there this great intellect, now submitted to Jesus, explodes from the desert with a message of the GRACE we receive from the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is transformed by the renewing of his mind. He enters the desert as the Pharisee of Pharisees and he exits the wilderness as the Apostle to the Gentiles and the preacher of the love, mercy and grace of Jesus Christ. He writes in II Corinthians 3: 4, 5 and 6 –

“Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

Emily, it's taken me 35 years to try to disengage from the legalism and a gotcha mentality of my legal training. And I think I'm doing pretty good, that is, until I go to the floor of Presbytery, and then something wells up within me, and it is angry and destructive, verbally biting and tears down, doesn't build up. I can switch into it so quickly and easily. Then I just shake my head and go, “Man, I thought I was doing better...but I guess I still need the grace of Jesus...”

The law kills but the Spirit gives life. The letter of the law kills but Jesus gives life. Phariseeism, legalism, trying to catch someone in their words, all this kills, but GRACE gives life. Emily, you have such giftedness; you have everything –preaching, teaching, pastoral skills, organizational skills, abilities and gifts pouring out from you. God has such a wonderful future set for you in ministry. I am blessed just to see you blossom and flourish in ministry. Emily, always preach the gospel. Emily, always preach about the GRACE of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has called you from the law into the Gospel. He has called you out of legalism into grace. These are the terms of your call. This is your message, your preaching and your life. God loves lawyers also...Jesus has loved you and He has loved me...and he has called us to be ministers of the NEW covenant, of a Savior and of a Spirit that gives life. BE that kind of minister, always. 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!*