

MISSION IS POSSIBLE!
November 10, 2013 – Consecration Sunday – Matthew 19: 23-30
The Church of the Covenant

I have attended the New Wilmington Missionary Conference since 1981. I have always tried to figure it out –is it a mission conference or is it a youth conference? Is it the old last vestige of the United Presbyterian Church, one of the predecessor denominations of the Presbyterian Church, or something more? It is held up in Anderson Auditorium up at Westminster College in New Wilmington, PA and Anderson is sort of a large, open air, metal Quonset hut, with sawdust on the floor, sort of like an old-timey camp meeting. Presbyterians hitting the sawdust trail? Really? What is this all about?

My first task in the Conference was to sleep in the boy's bathroom overnight. I think that's called starting at the bottom. But eventually I was asked to lead what was called the Delegate Bible Hour, for high school boys, at 9:00 a.m. in the morning, when they had no sleep the night before! As our scripture verse promises –*"With God all things are possible"*. And we did fun things as we studied the Bible. And we did challenging things as we studied the Bible –I challenged the young people to become the new missionaries of their day and to see that the world all around them was their mission field. And young people always respond to the Gospel; they respond out of their idealism and their heart to a challenge; they are not yet jaded like the adult world and will, instead of reciting like an adult the 10,000 reasons why something cannot happen, they will recite *"With God all things are possible"* and then they will act consistently with that belief. So I started with a class of about 50 and finally the high school girls started to come to the class and then the college students started to come and then the young adults also. We grew out of the room (300 or more!) where we were scheduled to meet and were moved into the front of Anderson Auditorium. I spoke from in front of the podium. And the students had cooked up a great farewell for the last day. They had put together more than 200 water balloons and brought them to class. They came up and said, "Stu, we have a gift for you." But we need you to turn around, face your back to us, and close your eyes." Now I wasn't born yesterday; my Mother didn't raise no fool. But it was right and good and the perfect end to a perfect week. So I hear, "one, two, three" LAUNCH! And two hundred water balloons are aimed at my head. I turn around just in time to see a blur of color heading for my head. Some of the balloons have broken in mid air and are just water now, a giant tsunami headed for Stu. They all shout, "INCOMING!" And I have just enough time to cover my head before being inundated with water, that then crashes onto the sawdust floor of Anderson, washing up over onto the stage and onto the podium, shorting out the sound system and completely drenching and covering with wet sawdust the place where the main speaker, the Institute Hour speaker is about to speak. I thought, "Uh oh, I think I could get kicked out of here for this one!"

Consecration is kind of like 200 water balloons of the living water of the Holy Spirit exploding all over some place. That is what I have been praying for today.

And come to find out that was exactly what used to happen in Anderson Auditorium many, many years ago. The New Wilmington Missionary Conference was an offshoot of what was called the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions that started in 1886. Remember last week when I told you about how the Presbyterian Church was in the forefront of the global mission movement; how it sent missionaries out into the world and moved the world from being 30% Christian to 50% Christian today? At the turn of the last century it was the young people who did that. Young people in their late teens and early twenties started attending prayer meetings and conferences and started becoming CONSECRATED IN SERVICE to go out into the world as missionaries. Their battle cry was: "The Evangelization of the whole world in this generation." Only a young person could have that kind of

idealism and faith. The adult world said: "It cannot be done". But they said: "*With God all things are possible.*" As part of the Student Volunteer Movement there was a card that was signed by a person who stepped forward to say –"Yes, Lord, I will go where you want me to go; I will do what you want me to do." On that card it said simply: "We are willing and desirous, God permitting, to become foreign missionaries." And then there was a place to sign and a date to remember. At the last day of the New Wilmington Missionary Conference at the last evening meeting in Anderson Auditorium the young people 100 years ago would have been challenged to step forward and commit their life in missionary service, they would be consecrated in the power in the blood of Jesus to serve and consecrated in the power of the Holy Spirit to serve. There was an old-timey hymn that was always sung on the last night entitled, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me?". During that time young people would step forward and say, I want to follow Jesus. And now I realize what Conference had forgotten, and what was lost over 100 years, that Consecration Night wasn't to hear some nice speeches, it was designed to consecrate one's life to serve. It was to step up and to commit to be a missionary. It wasn't to have a nice little spiritual experience; it was to do something. It was to say –my life plus God's life equals Mission IS Possible. People can be consecrated. Churches can be consecrated. You and I can be consecrated. The Church of the Covenant can be consecrated. If we but believe "Mission is Possible"; if we but believe with all our heart "with God all things are possible"; if we but step forward in new ways and are consecrated by the power of God to serve.

By the way, by 1910 through the Student Volunteer Movement 4338 young people went out into mission service, supported by the sacrificial giving of the churches and generations of prayer warriors, and were that generation that moved the percentage of Christians on the face of the earth from 30% to 50%. Because they believed 'WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE INDEED POSSIBLE.' Oh, for the blessing of consecration once again!

Our scripture is instructive. It begins by Jesus saying that "*it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.*" (Matthew 19: 24) The poorest person in this room is richer than 9/10ths of the world's population. Jesus is saying to us we have a duty and an obligation to more than just ourselves. We have been blessed by God with abundance and extraordinary giftedness in order to share that abundance and giftedness with the world. It is not enough to live for ourselves and for our own family and for our own small goals. It is only enough to live for God and for our community and for Kingdom sized goals. Small thinking isn't Kingdom of God thinking. Our God is too small if we think our life is only about ourselves. But our God is big enough if we are thinking about making a huge impact on our world. The disciples then say what every adult disciple always says: "Who then can be saved?" "How can we do that Lord?" "It is impossible the task you set before us." I don't have the time, you say. You're right, you don't. But God has all the time in the world, eternity is held within His hand; HE will make the time for you. I am too young, you say. Remember the Student Volunteer Movement. I bet a lot of young people think all these orange Involvement Cards and all these Pledge Cards aren't for them –its just for adults. No, its for you also; its for you to step it up and for you to make those commitments that can change our world. I am too old, you say; I cannot work on a Habitat for Humanity project any more. No, but you can sign up to be one of the prayer warriors with Pat Boyer and pray for God to consecrate us as a church and for God to raise up the people and the resources to do what God wants us to do here in Washington and out there in our world. I don't have the financial resources to help, you say. Little is much in the Kingdom of God. We're thinking small contribution just to support the work of The Church of the Covenant; I say, think larger, think like our mission is to Washington and our nation and to our world. Don't give out of your money; give out of your faith; give out of the faith in a world that CAN BE not what IS; give out of a spirit that "*With God all things are possible.*" (Matthew 19: 26) As I like to say, don't give a "human-sized gift"

give a “God-sized gift”; give to the coming of the Kingdom of God here in Washington and in our world. Give, not for what is; give for what can be. And rest this commitment of time and talent and treasure, not on our own power, rest it on the power of God. By ourselves, we can do nothing. “*Apart from me*”, says Jesus, “*you can do nothing*”. But with ME, promises Jesus, “*WITH GOD all things are possible.*” Whatever the voice is within your head that is saying, “This is impossible” replace it with the voice of Christ saying, “*With God all things are possible.*”

Consecration is being moved by God to UP OUR GAME. Wherever we are today, it is God asking us to be more, to have more faith, to give more, to be more, to understand our part in the Kingdom, to make bold promises like THIS IS THE GENERATION THAT IS GOING TO EVANGELIZE AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY AND IN OUR WORLD. I’m a missionary. I want to be part of a missionary church. Stand up. Step it up. Move it up a notch or two. This is who we are. This is who we have been. And by the power in the consecration of God’s Spirit this is who we can be!

I liken this time of Consecration into which we now move like in the old days up at the New Wilmington Missionary Conference. God has challenged us all this fall through the Word and through the Spirit to become “The Good Samaritan”. God has challenged us to see right outside our doors as the Mission Field into which we enter each week and every day. God has reminded us of our important role in global mission. God has reminded us as Presbyterians who we are and that becoming more and more mission-minded is in our spiritual DNA.

Up in Anderson Auditorium, when they would have Consecration Night, and young people would step forward to sign the mission pledge, they would always sing an old-timey hymn, in many ways the last vestige of that Student Volunteer Movement, was the singing of that hymn. The hymn began with the question: “What shall I render to the Lord, for all His benefits to me?” And it concluded: “In this house, the house of prayer, my solemn vows I pay. The life that God has made His care. I yield to Him this day.” Stand up. Be consecrated. Make vows to the Lord today. And yield your life to God. Because OUR LIFE plus GOD’S LIFE WITHIN equals MISSION POSSIBLE. 200 water balloons. “Incoming!” 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!*