

HELP, THANKS, WOW
January 10, 2016 –Mark 11: 15-18
The Church of the Covenant

Is there enough “WOW!” in your life? I mean the kind of “Wow” when you stand at the edge of the Grand Canyon and feel sucked into the grandness of something far larger than your own being. I mean the kind of “Wow” when you hold a baby (and every child is a miracle) and realize God thinks of us as “children of God and so we are”. I mean the kind of “Wow” when you see the hand of the Almighty, omnipotent, all-knowing, ever-living, perfectly loving God at work in your own life. I mean the very moment when you PRAY and God acts and you know that it is God and you know it is the hand of God and you know He is not some impersonal force in the universe but that He knows your name, He cares for you, even the hairs of your head are numbered and not a sparrow falls in your life that He does not know about it. I mean that kind of WOW. Is there enough WOW in your life TODAY? And if you had the opportunity every day to stand amazed at what God can do...and does do...and will do...would you take those steps to have WOW in your life every day??????

The title of my sermon comes from the title of a book by a favorite author of mine, Anne Lamott. Perhaps one of my most favorite books of all time is her book, *Traveling Mercies*, where she writes that basically all of prayer can be divided into two parts. The one –‘HELP ME, HELP ME, HELP ME, GOD!’ The other –‘THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, LORD!’ There are several of her books in our church library and a trip to the Carnahan Library just might be the beginning of more WOW in your life. In *“Help, Thanks, Wow”* I love her definition of prayer: *“Prayer can be motion and stillness and energy –all at the same time. It begins with stopping in our tracks, or with our backs against the wall, or when we are going under the waves, or when we are just so sick and tired of being psychically sick and tired that we surrender , or at least we stop running away and at long last walk or lurch or crawl toward something (or SomeONE).”* (*Help, Thanks Wow, Lamott p. 5*)

I used to not like getting up in the morning. I have three alarm clocks just to make sure I don’t miss church on Sunday mornings. But over the past several years I get up with joy and eagerness and expectancy every morning, whether I have to or not, because I am so excited at what God is going to do today. As I pray, He gives me words to help and comfort people, that are not my own. He gives me wisdom and strength way beyond my own ability. He writes my sermons for me. He directs my paths. He leads me each day to people I am to speak with and then provides even the words to say. You call me on the phone, almost apologetically, and ask me to do something, and I know that you were the answer to my prayer that morning. Sometimes He takes me into tough situations but gives me courage I do not naturally possess to face whatever I have to face that day. Guide my steps, Lord, and He does. I watch Him heal. I watch Him transform people’s lives. I watch Him give someone hope when they have despaired. Every morning His mercies are new. Every morning I think, “Well, today can’t be as exciting as yesterday” –but it is. He allows me to do things way beyond my ability and leads me in paths where I get to speak with people I would never have had the opportunity even to meet except for Him. WOW. WOW. WOW. Is there enough WOW in your life?

And as I have been praying lately I have a confession to make to the congregation I love. I have been selfish in prayer. I like to go into my prayer closet each morning and experience the WOW of God each day in prayer. But I have kept it to myself. I have kept the secret to WOW in our lives to myself. I have not given it away to you, the congregation whom I love. I like when you say, “Stu, would you please pray for this or that? (as if I have some personal pipeline to the Almighty that you don’t also have). And of course I always will pray for what you ask, except now I want to leverage your own prayer life. I want

to give away the JOY of prayer to you, as well. More than 30 years into ministry it is high time to share something that is personal and private and wonderful and blessed in my own life with you. I want you, please, to experience the same WOW I experience every day. Because God has shown me, not only how selfish I have been over so many years, but also the path to give away prayer, the “Help, Thanks, Wow” of prayer to those whom I love. The disciples of old asked Jesus, “*Lord, teach us to pray...*” and He taught them to pray by putting them into situations where they had to pray, and they had to rely on Him, and they had to do things far above what they thought they could do, and they had to pray ‘cause they had nothing else...And they did things that can only be described as the miraculous. The disciples of old saw Jesus with an exciting, miraculous prayer life and they wanted the same. There is nothing more exciting in this life than to watch God do what only God can do; to have a front seat to the movement of the Holy Spirit; to pray and to have God answer that prayer; to move us from “Help Me” to “Thanks, God” to “Wow –how awesome is that?????” Is there enough WOW in your life TODAY?

The scripture theme for our Covenant Prayer Summit that begins next week is from the Gospel of Mark where Jesus is quoting the Old Testament prophets as He reclaims the Temple for His Father in heaven. In righteous anger at what people have made of the Temple I imagine Him shouting at the top of His lungs –“*My house shall be a house of prayer...*” (Mark 11: 17) His reform of the household of God begins with prayer. His reform of the fallen Temple begins with reconnecting people with the source of their spiritual power, the Lord God Almighty, in prayer. Sitting quietly in the presence of God is where to start. Parking our heart before Jesus is where it begins. Having our being come into contact with the Being who created the universe is where a HOUSE OF PRAYER begins. And Jesus adds, “*but you have made it a den of robbers*”. (v. 11) You have robbed the people of the power of prayer, Stu. My house is not a house of activity for activities sake. My house is not a house of committee meetings. My house is not a house of going through the motions, of an empty religiosity lacking the movement of God’s Spirit. No, no , no –MY house, says Jesus, shall be a HOUSE of PRAYER. That’s how you know its Jesus’ house and not something else. That’s how you build this spiritual temple; you start with your connection to me in prayer, says the Lord.

Now should you choose to have more WOW in your life, and should you choose to come to the Covenant Prayer Summit next Sunday evening at 6:00 p.m., I will promise you certain things –One, you will not be asked to pray out loud; two, you will be in the presence of God and have the opportunity to silently and privately make your requests known to Him; three, I will work that no “funky agenda” is played out at the prayer meeting and I would ask that no social agendas would find their way into prayer; four, we will keep track of the prayer requests and more importantly when God answers prayer and we will celebrate together the WOW of when God not only hears our prayer but also answers our prayer. Stu, how do you know that God will answer our prayers? Because as I have prayed I know God is leading us to do this in order to demonstrate to us the WOW of answered prayer in our midst. I can and do trust in the Lord to show us what it means to pray “Help” and to pray “Thanks” and to pray “WOW”.

So, is there enough WOW in your life? Pray about it. Amen and Amen.

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