

GO AFTER IT!
September 17, 2017 –Psalm 34: 14 –Rally Day
The Church of the Covenant

I often find God speaks to me through scripture, prayer, music and the voice of little children. The scripture for today was the scripture theme for our Vacation Bible School this past July and the music from VBS was ringing in my ears. I feel sorry for you poor parents because I know your children are singing the songs every morning, noon and night. I know I fall asleep singing them and I awaken humming them. Same with the Bible verse –I am constantly stating and restating it in my head and doing the hand motions, as well. Do Good. Seek peace. Go after it! Is how Psalm 34 is rendered. *“Do good, seek peace, and pursue it” (Psalm 34: 14b)* is how the Revised Standard Version puts it. Somehow *“Go after it!”* is so much more dynamic than *“pursue it”*. Let’s be dynamic in our pursuit of the Holy God Almighty!

Another song that tends to always stick in my head and is a favorite is the hymn, *“Here I am, Lord.”* It is often sung at ordinations and installation services in the Presbyterian Church. It is based on the call of Isaiah from Isaiah 6: 8 where God asks, *“Whom shall I send?”* and Isaiah responds: *“Here am I. Send me.”* Now I both love and fear this hymn. I love it because the line *“I have heard you calling in the night”* is how I received my call to enter ministry while lying in my bed in a law school dorm room. I have feared it in the past because whenever I would hear it I would know I was called to go to another church. So Darla and I had a little holy deal. We would never pick the hymn *“Here I am, Lord”* at The Church of the Covenant because I never wanted to be called away from you all. I love you way too much. I always remember guest preaching when I was at Pittsburgh Seminary as Assistant to the President and once an organist came in right before the service to apologize and say, *“I know you had picked this other hymn but I felt this other particular hymn was better.”* I held my breath full well knowing exactly what was coming next. She said: (wait for it, wait for it) *“I chose “Here I am Lord.”* And shortly thereafter I was called to my next church.

So this past summer I am praying a lot and I felt very strongly that when the little children in Vacation Bible School were saying *“Go after it!”* the voice of God was speaking to me. And as I was praying more I had one of those little transforming moments when it became clear that the hymn *“Here I am Lord”* wasn’t calling me *away* anymore; it was calling me *to*; it was calling me to a new chapter right here,

right where I am, at The Church of the Covenant. So I am feeling powerfully called to be your Pastor right now. I am feeling God will use me to strengthen the church we love in this season. Good thing, too. I was away on vacation and I always go to church while away and went to First Presbyterian Church of Sandusky, Ohio. They had communion, which for me is always feeling called to be in the presence of God through His Son, Jesus Christ. And what would you guess was the closing hymn? Yep. Here I am, Lord. And I got a little weepy and verklempt, knowing and understanding its significance for me in relation to the church I love. Powerfully called to be your Pastor, I am. So...

Let's go after it. Let's have everything within us, our heart and our mind and our strength, go after it. Let's put in the full court press. Let's hold nothing back. Let's put our whole selves into this chapter of our church. What we put into it is what we'll get out of it. Let's be focused on the Lord. Let's keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter. Let's hear the call of God; let's feel the claim of Christ upon our lives. Let's do this. Let's pray and believe and work and hope. Be done with small things. Be done with divisions and distractions. Let's be the church God is calling us to be. Let's hear God calling us to step it up. To deepen our faith. To increase our walk. To be disciples raised up in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's do our utmost for His highest. This is our time. This is our moment. This is our time to make sure that our church is the bulwark of faith and strength God intends it to be. No holding back. Nothing held back in reserve. Nothing left on the table. All in. 100% for the Lord. In the power of God, let's go after it! Let's go after it!!!!!!

Who's with me today? Who feels the same way I do?

Funny, isn't it? How we can hear the voice of God in the voice of little children. Or in a hymn. Or in a piece of scripture, like we are hearing it for the very first time. Beloved, this is our time. Let's go after it. In Jesus' name. For the glory of God. Amen and Amen.

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!