

## Wesley United Methodist Church

October 1, 2017

“Who’s Working in You?”

Philippians 2:1-13

You’ve probably heard the story, it’s been floating around for many years and you may have heard it before: It seems three-year-old Katie was taken to her pediatrician during a bout with the flu. As the doctor examined her ears, he asked, “Will I find Big Bird in there?” Katie replied, “No.” Then, before examining her throat, he asked, “Will I find Cookie Monster in here?” Again, “No.” Finally, listening to her heart, he asked, “Will I find Barney in here?” With innocent conviction, she looked him directly in the eye and said, “No, Jesus is in my heart. Barney is on my underwear.”

Katie had it right, didn’t she? She might have only been three, but I think she understood the nature of today’s scripture passage.

Read Philippians 2:1-13

This is an important passage of scripture to keep in your heart. The apostle Paul, the author of this letter, doesn’t care who’s on your underwear, he just wants to know “Who’s Working In You?” This is actually a question of the heart.

The answer is simple and is found in verse 13. “It is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and work for God’s good pleasure.” There are certain abilities we need in order to answer the question “Who’s Working In You?”

The first ability we need is accountability. There is an old Japanese legend that tells of a man who died and went to heaven. Heaven was beautiful, full of lush gardens and glittering mansions. But then the man came to a room lined with shelves. On the shelves were stacked piles of human ears. A heavenly guide explained that these ears belonged to all the people on earth who listened each week to the word of God, but never acted on God’s teachings. Their worship never resulted in action. When these people died, only their ears ended up in heaven. It’s not a question of who has your ear, it’s a question of who has your heart. Does God have your heart?

The second ability is availability. A man applied for a job as a handyman. The prospective employer asked, “Can you do carpentry?” The man answered with no. “How about bricklaying?” Again, the answer was “No.” “Well, what about electrical work?” Again, “No, I don’t know anything about that either.” Finally, the employer asked, “Well, tell me then what is handy about you?” The man replied, “I live just around the corner.”

Sometimes the greatest ability we can have is availability. To be where God can call us, to be within whisper range of his summons.

The third ability we need is adoptability. A wonderful story about a group of military leaders who succeeded in building a super computer that was able to solve any problem, large or small, strategic or tactical. These military leaders assembled in front of the new machine for demonstration. The engineer conducting the demonstration instructed the officers to feed a difficult tactical problem into it. The military leaders proceeded to describe a hypothetical situation to the computer and then asked the pivotal question: attack or retreat? This enormous super computer hummed away for an hour and then printed out its one-word answer...YES. The generals looked at each other, somewhat embarrassed. Finally, one of them submits a second request to the computer: YES WHAT? Instantly the computer responded: YES, SIR.

We’re not computers, but we’re asked relevant questions about our lives, our work and who is working in us. Our response should be, “Here I am Lord.” Use me, take me, fill me, guide me, whatever, but “Here I am Lord. The answer to the ultimate question is “Jesus.”

Another ability is credibility. Some years ago, a physician came to a high school to talk about the danger of smoking. The physician scared the students with his grim pictures of smokers’ lungs and tales of death from lung cancer. They were all impressed, especially those boys who would sneak out behind the shop building at lunch to light one up. But a couple of guys saw the doctor himself lighting up when he got back in his car after the lecture. His credibility was shot. He was the talk of the campus. Saying one thing and doing another is something nobody respects.

The last ability I want to touch on is visibility. There was a Southern writer who wrote great books with funny titles. One of them is called They’re Riding Shetland Ponies. It’s a book full of short stories of ordinary people who chose to serve others. In the writer’s estimation they were heroes. His point was that the real heroes in life aren’t those who ride in on the white horse dressed like the Lone Ranger or the White Knight. Instead, they’re the ordinary people who will humble themselves, reach out their arms to serve others. Servants are heroes who ride Shetland ponies.

There was an old man in Chicago who got a burden and a passion in his heart for the inner-city kids in Chicago. He didn’t have a big developed plan, but what he decided to do was just to adopt an inner city high school. What he did was every time there was a sports practice he would be there and spend time with the kids. If it was basketball season, he’d be there when the basketball players came out of the locker room. If it was football season, he would be there and hang out with the kids. And he made sure in that time that they knew he thought they were special and they mattered. He

made sure that they knew that God and Jesus thought they mattered and they were very special. Somebody who watched this going on came to him and said, "Man, what are you doing wasting your time and these kid's time. You're not young, you're not hip, you don't speak their language what are you doing wasting your time and theirs." The man said, "You're right, I'm not young, I'm not hip and I don't speak their language, but when I'm there, God's got one more option than when I'm not." It's not about being great, it's about choosing for the sake of our love for Christ and others to give God one more option when we're there than when we're not. That's visibility.

Here we have a few answers to the question, "Who's Working In You?" And if you say "Yes" to God through Jesus Christ you allow God to work in you. "It is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for God's good pleasure. Amen.