

RIDE SHARING



Scripture:

Psalms 107:1-3 & 17-22

¹O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. ²Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those he redeemed from trouble ³and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

¹⁷Some were sick through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities endured affliction; ¹⁸they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. ¹⁹Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress; ²⁰he sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction. ²¹Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. ²²And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices, and tell of his deeds with songs of joy.

Ephesians 2:1-10

¹You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— ⁹not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



ASH WEDNESDAY

Several weeks ago after the Ash Wednesday service here at Church of the Roses, I was on my way home and my route took me past St Eugene's Catholic Church, just a few blocks from here. The marquee on their sign had emblazoned, "It's Lent, Repent." "It's Lent, Repent." Repent is not a word we banter about a whole lot in the Presbyterian Church. We like to be a bit less direct in our language. Yet that is what a lot of people think of the church is: a place to go and repent, to ask God

for forgiveness. That is often what we think of, especially during Lent. And yes, I think repenting is a good thing, especially if you have done something that you truly need to be forgiven for, something you are really sorry about, or something you really screwed up on. I know there have been numerous times in my life when I have needed to repent.

Yet when we place our focus during Lent on needing to repent, I think we lose a great opportunity to draw closer to God. I think one of the most important aspects of Lent is not so much repenting for doing something we should not have

done, but what we could be doing to become better people.

Traditionally during lent the church suggests that in order to draw closer to God we should give up something important for the forty days between Ash Wednesday and Easter. What you give up is supposed to be something you find comfort or pleasure in, like chocolate or ice cream. Or perhaps you give up a bad habit like eating too much or cursing. But I have noticed personally that I don't have that much trouble giving up something I like. I think in part it is because I usually seem to find something to replace what I gave up. I give up ice cream and replace it with cookies; that's not much of a sacrifice. But what I do find much harder to do is to add something to my daily routine, like exercising, or calling on an old friend, or spending time with friends and family, developing relationships, and maybe even getting to know someone new.

ADDING IS HARDER THAN SUBTRACTING

Adding is so much harder than subtracting, and in reality that is what Lent is all about. We need to spend time getting out of our regular routine that is so comfortable. We need to dig deeper into discovering who we are, how we can be better people, and how we can serve God more fully.

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

The great American mythologist, writer and lecturer, Joseph Campbell said, "We must be willing to get rid of the life we planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us."

Easter gives us the courage to live, the courage to change. But in order to truly live, to be in a solid, strong relationship with God, we may have to die, or should I say our old way of living may need to die, because it is only in dying that new life can be born. Christianity is the process of bringing life out of death. When we put our trust and faith in God, our false self fades, and our true self begins to emerge.

So what life is waiting for you? Who do you place your trust and faith in? Who is your God? Who is the Lord of your life? Are you ride sharing with God? That is, are you allowing and including God in your daily living?

For most of my adult life I have been self-employed. It wasn't until about a year and a half ago when I got a regular job working as the Executive Director at Westminster Woods Camp and Conference Center that I started getting a regular pay check. There is something about self-employment that people can find very appealing, especially those people who have never been self-employed. People would always tell me that it must be so good not having a boss or having to work the same boring schedule every day. It must be such a freeing experience not having to answer to anyone but yourself. Little do they realize that yes, I didn't have to go to work at the same time every day, but I also didn't get to go home at the same time every day. Nearly every working day was a whole lot longer than eight hours. If I worked less than fifty-five hours a week I felt like it was an easy week.

FREELANCER

Being self-employed, being a freelancer, not having a regular work schedule or paycheck can be incredibly challenging. Freelancing, self-employment certainly has its rewards, but it also has its disadvantages.

In American society we place a great deal of value and respect on people who are self-employed, self-made freelancers.

The word freelancer was first mentioned in a book by Thomas N. Brown entitled "*The Life and Times of Hugh Miller*." The book was written in 1809. The word freelancer became more popular after it was used in the more well-known book "*Ivanhoe*." The term freelancer was originally attributed to soldiers, mercenary soldiers. Their loyalty was for sale; it went to the highest bidder. The lord of their lives was the all mighty dollar, but it came at a cost. There was no guarantee of regular work, let alone a regular paycheck. There was no ride sharing here; the freelancers were totally dependent upon themselves. Heck, they didn't even have the guarantee of a place to live or a place to call home. They had to move from place to place just to find work. There was no lord of their life, no one to call upon or rely upon in time of need. Being a freelancer was not an easy way of life, not in 1809, not even today. Living a life with no boundaries, no lord, no ride sharing, is anything but free.

FREE RANGE

The idea of free is a word that most Americans find so appealing and very empowering. In current American culture the idea of only eating free range chicken and turkey is very much in vogue. Free range parenting has even become popular and somewhat controversial. I have no idea why it is so controversial. Heck, when I was a kid my mom was thrilled if my older brother and I would go outside and play unsupervised, and the longer the better. We would stop by the house occasionally, typically only long enough to get food and water, to get provision for the rest of the day. We would be dirty and sometimes maybe even a little bloody, but mom would feed us and clean us up a bit and send us back outside.

I can still hear my mom saying, “Go boys, go outside and play; dinner won’t be until after six, so go and play and you don’t need to come home until dinner time.”

Now I may be exaggerating a bit, but parenting in the 1960’s, at least in my neighborhood, was free range parenting at its best, although no one called it free range parenting, just simply parenting. My brother and I were free to play and explore. As long as mom knew where we were and when we would be home, we were free to roam.

But when I think about that, mom was still always there, maybe not in person, but certainly in spirit. We knew what was right and what was wrong; she and my dad had taught us that. We knew where we could play and where we could not.

**We knew how far we could roam,
and what was off limits.
Free, yes, but still yoked to home.
It was the fact that we were still yoked
that made the freedom so free.
It was the ride sharing at its best.**

Now I have a feeling that nearly all of us at times in our lives want to be freelancers, beholden to no one, free to do whatever we want, whenever we want to do it. And yet, if we are not careful in this freedom, we will enslave ourselves to the values of the world in which we live, looking out only for our own welfare, our own self-interests and not being at all concerned about the needs of others. That is not freedom at all.

Now that is not to say that all freelancers, all self-employed people are bad people, are mercenaries; no, far from it. I think most successful freelancers are people who are not afraid to fail. They push themselves to excel at what they are doing. Their success often lies in their ability to work outside the norms of society, outside the box. But their financial success almost always lies in their ability to deliver a product or service that meets the needs of the values their society holds most dear. But it is through their failure that they discover who they truly are. They embrace the death of the old way of life, perhaps unwillingly at first, but they ultimately understand that it is only in the dying that they can begin anew. It is only in their strong connection and commitment with their community that they can succeed.

EPHESIANS

Paul, the writer of Ephesians reminds us that, “You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of the world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us lived among them...”

We all fall short, we all make mistakes, we all need to repent. But we even more need to live a life that is true to God’s values. We need to shed the corrupted values of this world and turn our focus onto living a life that God has called us to do. That may mean some dying may need to occur in our lives, and learning how to be better at ride sharing with God.

Paul goes on to say, “For we (that is you and me) are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”

Our way of life, God has already prepared for us. It is all in place and ready to go. Being paired with God and having Jesus as our guide is a wonderful way to engage life; it is the ultimate ride sharing. Now that is not to say that because we make God the lord of our lives we will not have bad things happen to us in our lives, because we most likely will have some bad that happens, that’s life. Unfortunately, bad can’t always be avoided. But when we keep God front and center and the lord of our lives, when we are ride sharing our lives with God, the burdens that we will encounter will be much less daunting. When we have a strong faith and a solid connection with our family and friends

and our church community, the unforeseen challenges of life become much less foreboding. When we have others that can support us in our time of trial, the burdens of life are easier to bear. Our yoke is easy, our burden is light. We need to share life's ride.

T-SISTERS

There is a song that I really like that expresses this idea of ride sharing so well. It was written and sung by a group of three sisters from Oakland. They call themselves the T-Sisters. Let's listen.

I've been roughed up talked down, oh I been schooled

But at least I know I've been a fool

It's been starin' at me at me

Oh why didn't I see

And I hope it's not too late to go...

Somewhere way down the track oh I thought I'd hop on

See how far this journey unfolds

Now I'll never look back and I know I wasn't wrong

Oh I'll stay on this train till I'm old

Woo woo I hear it comin

Woo woo oh it's in the air

Woo woo there be no more runnin, cause I'm already there

Woo woo it takes me higher

Woo woo oh it brings me peace

Woo woo I feel the fire, I'm inspired by the heat

Oh it's been a long road and I can't tell you the distance

Right now that seems obsolete

I'll keep ridin as long as I'm given the chance

And that is all I need to feel complete

Woo woo there'll be no more sorrow

Woo woo I will leave the fear

Woo woo I'll feel the water but it won't be from my fears

Woo woo it makes me lighter

Woo woo oh I won't look back

Woo woo I'll never tire of the rhythm of the clickety clack

Oh I don't know where I'm going

And the line just keeps twistin

Maybe I couldn't get there if I tried

But I'll keep chugging along

Won't regret what I've been missin

Baby I'm along for the ride

Woo woo I hear it comin

Woo woo oh it's in the air

Woo woo there be no more runnin, cause I'm already there

Woo woo it makes me lighter

Woo woo oh I won't look back

Woo woo I'll never tire of the rhythm of the clickety clack

Woo woo oh I'm feeling so good today

Woo woo I'm finally on my way

Woo woo there are really no words to say but...

Yeahhhh

Woo woo oh I'm feeling so good today

Woo woo I'm finally on my way

Woo woo there are really no words to say but...

Yeahhhh

We will all be finally on our way to true freedom:

- When we too are willing to jump on, share the ride, feel that fire and be inspired by the heat.
- When we set our old self-serving life aside, engage in life fully with one another, and even with strangers, and let God be the lord of our lives.
- When we follow the example Jesus set in how to live an abundant life, life will be so much more complete.

And that my friends, is what ride sharing is all about. Yeahhhh! Amen



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