

**Bob preached this sermon October 4, 2020.
He won't be regularly in a pulpit, but,
God willing, for the foreseeable future,
we shall post new sermons by him
on this website each week.**

Though I announced our retirement several weeks ago, and knew its necessity, in some ways I never wanted this day to arrive.

When we began the ministry here autumn 1996 on an interim basis, Norma and I never dreamed:

First, that it would last 24 years;

Second, that we'd become so attached to any group of people. We had no idea of your love and devotion to the Lord—and I must add—your patience. We've always felt ourselves privileged to work with the members of this church. This church has an extraordinary work-membership ratio. I refer to the percentage of members who actively participate in some ways. You are not just Sunday pew occupiers.

Last week I calculated the number of sermons I've preached from this pulpit. If I computed correctly, the total is about one thousand, one hundred sermons. Eleven hundred sermons result in a lot of gas and hot air. Although I do admit to inadvertently

duplicating a few illustrations, I don't think I ever preached the same sermon twice.

The word *retirement* doesn't define my plans. I intend to reduce my preaching schedule, but not to retire from the Lord or from working. Changing emphasis better describes my hopes and plans.

First, God willing, I want to spend more time with Norma.

In the translation known as *The Message*, Proverbs 5, verses 18 & 19 read:

“Enjoy the wife you married as a young man!
Lovely as an angel, beautiful as a rose—
don't ever quit taking delight in her . . .
Never take her love for granted!”

The NIV adds”

“may you ever be intoxicated with her love.”¹

These verses contain other delicate info, which every husband and wife should read together.

Later on, Proverbs states:

“Find a good spouse, you find a good life—
and even more: the favor of GOD!”²



Preaching at Hollywood Church in Filipino garb. Bob also preached in Nigerian and Mexican shirts. Hollywood members and attendees represented dozens of countries.

¹ Proverbs 5:18, 19 NIV

² Proverbs 18:22 *The Message*

I thank God for helping me find a great spouse and for his mercy and grace in keeping us together through good times and many trials.

A second change of emphasis for me centers on writing. That was my intention the first time I “retired” 29 years ago.

For about forty years, I've worked on a manuscript that I feel of increasing importance. Ministry obligations, and I must admit, some lesser distractions, sidetracked me. At the age of 84, one can no longer say with any surety,

“I'll get this done next year.”

Why do I consider the book I'm writing so vital? It's about understanding the *Book of Revelation*. The Lord gave *Revelation* to assure people just like you, urging them toward greater faith. Ordinary believers should be able to grasp its message.

Many scams exist in the religious world. So-called Christian authors con many people about the *Book of Revelation*.

Only the Lord knows their motivations, I'm sure many are quite sincere. Nonetheless, the effects of what they teach and write scares hell out of people.



That's not always a bad thing, of course. People who defy God and mistreat others should fear judgment and hell, but sincere, loving believers should find joy and hope. The Holy Spirit gave *Revelation* to encourage Christians, not to scare them. I'd like folks to find the confident courage God gives.

Years ago I read about a Hollywood actor, who on a date, bragged at length about his career. He finally said to the girl:

“Enough of this talk about me. Let's talk about you for a while. What do you think of my latest movie?”

Enough said about me, Norma and our hopes. We need to talk about you a while.

***The Book of Acts* tells that soon after Pentecost when the church began, the Apostles Peter and John healed a lame man near the Jerusalem Temple.**

The authorities' didn't react positively when Peter and John healed a forty-year-old local man who had never walked.

Envy, greed and power-lust badly infected the guys in charge.

I pray you'll take this account home and read it noting how jealousy and lust for control warped the leaders' judgment.

They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people!⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed,¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.

¹¹ Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.'¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."¹³

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.¹⁴ But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.¹⁵ So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.¹⁶ "What are

we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it.¹⁷ But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name."¹⁸ Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!

²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."²¹ After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened.²² For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.

²⁵ "You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶ The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.'²⁷

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. ³

Please note verse 13 of our text.

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

If you knew Peter, John, James, or any of the apostles as Jesus knew them, you would laugh to now hear them called saints.

All were married working guys, with hopes, ambitions, fears, and frustrations you share. ⁴

Verse 13 says the authorities realized this.

They saw unschooled, ordinary guys.

³ Acts 4:7-31 NIV

⁴ See 1 Corinthians 9:5

None received extra formal religious training or schooling.

**Not one possessed extraordinary ability.
Until after Jesus resurrection, the
Disciples often greatly disappointed him.**

In today's reading, Israel's authorities ordered the Apostles to quit preaching about Jesus.

Cease by order of the court.

Had the Twelve obeyed the officials, none of us would be here today.

This world would look totally different.

Thank God, love, kindness, and faith in God prevailed over jealousy, greed, vengeance, and hate.

We clearly live in trying times.

Hostility, revenge, and violence increase around us.

Many feel helpless and hopeless.



Yet within you today, powerful potential exists.

You possess great possibility.

“Bob, how can we do even a fraction of what the Apostles did?”

That the apostles were ordinary guys astonished the authorities,

What changed these regular working guys into fearless, gutsy, witnesses for Christ?

“These men had been with Jesus.”

In a few simple, doable ways, believers now can accomplish great unimaginable things. How?

1. Spend time with Jesus.

“I pray,” you say, but do you spend reading his Word so he can talk to you?

“But he’s not here!” you say.

Yes he is. He’s present in his Word.

Remember, Jesus said,

“I’ll be with you always.”

We quit fretting about the world’s rumors and what its “experts” endlessly speculate.

Media people, actors, and politicians thrive on bad news, fame, and lust for power.

Dreadful news sells better than happiness.

They never change their focus on hate, divisiveness, and hearsay.

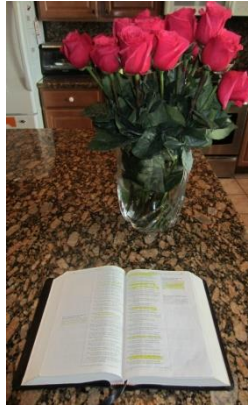
Do you know the origin of the word, *devil*?

Devil means, “Malicious gossip.”

When reporters use “anonymous” or “unnamed” sources to substantiate their stories, they’re merely relating malicious gossip.

When anyone tells you hearsay damaging to the reputation of another, the devil is speaking.

Based on the evidence of false witnesses, the establishment killed Jesus.



Did you notice all the good news about Jesus the political leaders refused to consider?

In Jesus’ name, a 40 year old cripple walked and jumped for the first time ever.

Far more important, in Jesus resurrection, he defeated death and brought life potential to every human being who believes in him.

Yet folks were so hate-filled and envious, they closed their eyes to God’s great news.

Spend time with Jesus. Love as he loved.

Turn away from malicious gossip and worry.

Serve God above all other things.

He’ll do great things for you and through you.

2. Pray for boldness and wisdom.

People who think that Christianity is a crutch for weaklings don’t know much about Jesus or his followers.

Standing for Jesus amidst a world of scoffers takes great courage and boldness.

Did you catch the content of the apostles’ prayer?

“Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.”

To prayers for wisdom and boldness, God always says “yes!”

Spend time with Jesus and pray constantly for boldness and wisdom.

3. Jesus didn't tell us to promote our church and tell how great our congregation or denomination is.

Jesus sent us to tell God's good news that he forgives those who repent and that Jesus defeated death in his resurrection.

By spending quality daily time in the word, praying for boldness and telling God's good news, great potential comes alive in you.

Two individuals I knew in the 1970s illustrate these truths.

About that same time, a neighborhood friend in the old Cedars of Lebanon Hospital told me about a man who shared his hospital room a few days earlier. "He could probably use your help," said my friend Manny, who at the time was dying of leukemia.

When I visited this gentleman in his hospital room I saw something I have never seen equaled. This man attained the status, power, and money in Hollywood many dream of having.

He produced the most



Old Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, LA

famous TV news program of that era. He and his attractive wife lived in a stylish Hollywood Hills home.

The first time I entered his hospital room I saw eyes filled with terror and a body racked and restless with fright. Fear of death encapsulated him. At his graveside service, no Hollywood associate or neighbor came to grieve. One lone friend accompanied his wife at the Veterans Cemetery in West LA.

The second individual moved to LA in the 1960s. She likely never won any beauty contests and never excelled academically. I think that she and her husband rode Harleys in their younger days. Yet she became exceptional because she spent time with Jesus. She probably knew more about the Scriptures than most preachers I know. She began teaching 5th graders in the Hollywood church Sunday school. She gave me copies of nearly every lesson she taught and I still have them.

She gave those kids printed weekly assignments and she graded every lesson with a red pencil. The kids loved her. All our kids had Esta for a teacher. The church people made a big deal of her retirement from teaching. Some of her former students came long distances to honor her and thank her.

Diagnosed with cancer, she went to her daughter's home for her last days. I visited her and prayed often with her in her hospital-style bed. Esta's face reflected victory in Jesus. I think she'll be raised with Christ on that last day

Jesus said he'd be with us to the close of the age. If we aren't spending quality with him, we're missing our opportunity for eternal life.

1. **Spend time with Jesus.**
2. **Pray for boldness and wisdom while you attempt to model Jesus in your daily life.**
3. **Tell God's good news that he forgives those who repent and that Jesus' powerfully defeated death in his resurrection.**

God will do miraculous things through you.

He will supply your needs in ways you never dreamed.

God bless you for your faithful love and may he keep you safe in Christ!



Esta, with some of her former students (about 1972). Steve Blair is in Hollywood High letterman's jacket. Rob is behind him to his left. Stephanie is second from Esta's left. Janice stands far right in the photo.



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