

## Devotions for the Week of January 28, 2018

### LARGE-PRINT

### *“Shaking Up”*

North East United Methodist Church

By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

### Sunday, January 28, 2018

**Read Mark 1: 21-28; Luke 4: 31-37.**

A couple of years ago, Deb and I traveled to Lancaster, Pennsylvania for the Annual Bishop’s Retreat. Our speaker, Dr. Kwasi Kena, challenged us to ask the question, *“Why does the church exist?”* and *“Do we believe Christ is alive and worth following?”*

One passage that Dr. Kena spoke on was from the gospel of Mark, when Jesus met a man possessed by an *“impure spirit.”* Jesus rebuked the spirit and said, *“Come out of him!”* The scripture says, *“The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.”*

Dr. Kena went on to talk about how a church where God is moving...a church that is following Christ and drawing close to the Savior...in such a church there will be a lot of *“shaking”* going on...violent *“shaking”* at times. Christ is still removing spirits...spirits of addiction, spirits of control, spirits of power, spirits of prejudice, spirits of pride...Christ is removing them today. When a church, or a person, comes close to Jesus, hears His Word proclaimed, those spirits that are not of God are suddenly challenged to come out...and they don’t want to come out...and many times there is a whole lot of *“shaking”* that takes place before those spirits come out and the person is freed to follow Jesus, free to experience rebirth, free to be used in new and exciting ways by God to further His kingdom.

This week, I want us to take a look at that process...a process God is taking each one of us through...challenging us to be more, to become more, to be free to follow Him with ALL of us, with our whole being. But before that can happen, God has to *“shake”* the things out of us that are not of Him. As Dick Wills writes, in Waking To God’s Dream, *“It is not what you are now that is important, but what God wants you to be and what you can be with faith.”*

Are there things that God is challenging you on? Is God looking into your life, seeing the way you are acting, are treating others, your attitude, your lack of prayer, your pride? Is God seeing a spirit that is not of Him and saying, “*Come out of him!...Come out of her!*” Pray that God would remove all that is not of Him in this New Year, and help you to love and live like Christ.

### **Monday, January 29, 2018**

**Read Acts 9: 1-31; 2 Corinthians 5: 17; Revelation 21:5.**

Each of us, when we come to church, when we come to the scriptures, we come with our **ORIENTATION**. We come with our background, our beliefs, what we have been taught, what we feel is important, what we like. This is our orientation. But whenever we are confronted by God’s Word, a disruption takes place and we experience **DISORIENTATION**. If we stick it out, if we allow God to work, if we allow His Word and vision to penetrate, we will experience **REORIENTATION**.

We see this throughout the scriptures as God comes in, disorients and reorients, the life of Moses, Gideon, David, Jonah, Isaiah, Paul, Peter, and so many others. In each of these situations, God disrupts their lives...God does something new...a new creation is born...old ways of thinking are discarded...the individual experiences God deeply and many lives are changed.

Isn’t this what took place when Christ was born? It was a Holy Disruption. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, describing the birth of Christ, “[This is] *no idyllic family affair, but the beginning of a complete turnaround, a reordering of everything on this earth.*”

We certainly don’t like our lives disrupted. Yet, God is often in the disruption, attempting to grow us, challenge us, change us, into a new creation...wanting to do a new thing in our lives and the life of our church.

Where do you see God’s disruption in your life, in the life of the church? Where do you see God breaking in and doing a new thing? How can you join Him in His work? Ask God to show you where He is at work and to help you not be afraid to “*let go and let God*” as you travel through this New Year.

## **Tuesday, January 30, 2018**

**Read Judges 6; Exodus 3-4: 17; Jonah 1; Acts 9: 1-19.**

Whenever God places a calling on someone's life...challenges a person on how they are living or how they have always done things...pushes someone to take the next step in their faith...Whenever God challenges a church to move forward, leaving the status quo behind and entering into the work God is ready to accomplish...the first stage of response is usually RESISTANCE.

We see this throughout scripture. God tells Gideon that God is sending him against the Midianites; his response is *"But Lord, how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!"* God tells Moses that he will go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt and Moses replies, *"Lord, please! Send anyone else."* God tells Jonah that he is to go to Ninevah and Jonah runs the other way. God tells Ananias to go and pray with a man named Saul and Ananias responds, *"But Lord, I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem!"*

Time and time again, when God moves and asks us to do something, when God disrupts one's life, when God challenges us, our first response is to **RESIST**. Remember the *"shaking!"* We must push through this very human response to God involving Himself in our lives. Do you find yourself resisting God's pull on your life? Do you find yourself resisting God and the changes He wants to make in your life? Pray that God will give you strength and help you to trust Him in this New Year.

## **Wednesday, January 31, 2018**

**Read I John 4:1; James 4:7-8; Philippians 4:6-7.**

Often we RESIST God's call on our lives, God's disruption, because it scares us, it challenges us, it pushes us...we don't like it. We must **RECLAIM** our faith...Do we trust God? Do we truly believe God has our best interests at heart? Is it possible that God is challenging us in this area? Is it possible that God does want to change us, use us, send us? Is what God telling us in line with His Word, the scriptures? At some point, we must stop RESISTING and allow ourselves the

possibility that this could, indeed, be God leading us, guiding us, to a new place, and if it is, we don't want to miss it. We must submit.

At this stage, it's not about how we feel...we may still be scared, angry, nervous, but we RECLAIM our faith in God...We turn to His Word...We test the Spirits....Is what we feel God challenging us on in line with His Word? We pray and we trust that if it is God calling us to change, to move...God will reveal Himself and give us the strength. As Gideon told the angel of the Lord, *"...give me a sign that it is really you talking to me...Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you..."* Pray. Offer God thanks. Read His Word. Trust Him.

### **Thursday, February 1, 2018**

**Read 2 Tim. 3: 16-7; Romans 8: 26-7; Proverbs 3: 5-6;  
Ephesians 4: 15-6.**

Next, we experience **REVELATION**. We RECLAIM our faith, we trust and seek God, and through faith, God REVEALS Himself and makes Himself known. If we are willing to entertain the idea that perhaps God is challenging us...If we fall back on our faith and in prayer seek God and His will for our lives, God will reveal to us His plans through scripture, prayer, circumstances, & the church, other Christians. We will begin to discover what God is asking of us. Again, once Gideon fell back to His faith...made offerings to God...God revealed Himself and God made His plans clear, explaining to Gideon that he was to "tear down his father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God." Ask God to help you understand His plans for you.

### **Friday, February 2, 2018**

**Read Luke 9: 23-24; Gal. 2:20; Isaiah 41:10; Isaiah 40:31.**

Then, God's call on our lives leads to **RISK**. We have heard God calling...We have RESISTED...then, we fell back on our foundation...God's Word...our faith...and we RECLAIMED our faith in God...We pray, listen and test where we feel God is leading us with His Word...God REVEALS Himself...We know it is God moving in our midst, God calling us to the next step, the next level...calling us to

change, to grow, to move...Now we have a choice to make! Do we stay or do we go?

There was certainly great risk involved when it came to Gideon, tearing down the altar to Baal, or Moses going against Pharaoh, or Jonah preaching repentance to the city of Ninevah, or Ananias going to meet with an enemy of the people.

Jesus will not send us anywhere where Jesus will not go with us. “*I will be with you always,*” Jesus told us. Jesus never said the road would be easy, or even that we would come out of it with our lives. There are over 165,000 martyrs each year for the faith. Walking with Christ is not easy and if you are finding your walk with Christ comfortable, I would challenge whether or not you are truly walking with Him.

There is great risk involved in following God. There is a whole lot of “*shaking*” that takes place in following God. Our lives are disrupted in following God. We must decide if we are convinced, if we truly believe, that walking with Jesus is worthwhile...that it is worth the risk...worth the struggle...worth the growing pains...worth the changes...worth the work.

God would rather have twelve who were on “*fire*” for Him...who were ready to take any risk for Christ...then a church full of “*lukewarm*” Christians. As God has shown before, a small group of twelve on “*fire*” for Him, can change the world.

Are you willing to take the risk? Are you willing to step out on faith? To follow Christ wherever He may lead you? Are you willing to allow Christ to disrupt your life? Take time tonight to sit with God, to pray, and to think about how far you are willing to follow Him.

### **Saturday, February 3, 2018**

**Read** the Scriptures for this Week from the Revised Common Lectionary...**Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111; I Cor. 8:1-13; Mark 1:14-20.** Spend time with God in prayer tonight.

**Don't forget to invite someone to church tomorrow.**