



FIRST (SCOTS) SERMONS

“LIVING THE GOOD LIFE”

Scripture Lessons: Joshua 1:8-9; Romans 12:2

*This sermon was preached by Rev. Tracey Daniel on Sunday, May 30, 2021
at First (Scots) Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina.*

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Leader: The Word of God for the People of God

People: Thanks be to God.

Who doesn't want to live the good life? And what does that mean exactly? If I ask you who you know that is living the good life, who would you name? My guess is most of us would share the name of someone who is rich, good looking and famous. This of course, is who the world considers, the person living the good life. So, if we are all striving to live this good life according to the world or conforming to the world. But Paul tells us that to live the life that is good, acceptable and perfect we need to be renewing our minds. Most of our waking hours and productive activity is going to go to this goal. Time spent pursuing our goals. Rich, work hard to make money, however you choose to do that. Good looking, eat right, exercise and of course, spend time doing and buying whatever it is in the world that is selling this week to make this happen. Popular, inviting people to the right events, spend time on your social media profiles, making sure everyone can see just how good your life is and therefore, they will want to spend their time with you and will invite you to all the right places.

That is so tempting isn't it? Who doesn't want to live that kind of Good Life? Well, that's what the world offers us and it is very appealing. After all, in the 168 hours there are in our week, we are bombarded with this message. Our society and world offers no shortage of ideas about how we can obtain this good life. The world promotes the idea that if you have enough wit and a lot of grit, you can have what you want. Speaking of grit, you may have heard me or Suzy Edwards say we are training for a Sprint Triathlon. It is an event that is scheduled for the end of the summer where we will swim, bike and then run. It's a sprint, which means the distances for each of these events are relatively short. In order for us to finish the race well, we have to train for each part. As we are training, we are learning new skills and developing some muscle memory. The training is necessary to reach our goal.

In much the same way, if we are going to be faithful Christians, it's going to take some intentional training. I want to argue that God calls us to live an abundant life, a good life, but it is not defined by how rich we are, how good looking we are or how popular we are! Living the Good Life according to God is living a life loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves. I don't think God is against us being rich, good looking or popular, but that certainly isn't what God calls us to make the main purpose of our life. And when we do, we are being conformed to the world. Instead, God calls us to focus on higher things. The will of God is perfect for us. Good for us. As the

main goal of our lives, our purpose as Christians is to love God and enjoy God forever. Then in our living, we will be so grateful to God for we will spend our lives helping others.

Paul's word for us today says we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds? And why does he use the word renew? Well, the easy answer to the first question is easy. If you are a Christian, at some point as an act of your own free will, you made a decision, and you made promises to follow Christ. In order to follow Christ, there are things we need to do, spiritual practices that we must put into place. I suspect you already know what those are if you are worshipping this morning.

Today the church all over the world is celebrating Trinity Sunday. Trinity Sunday is one of those special days marked by our church calendar so that we will highlight and remember something that the church has considered important. On Trinity Sunday, we affirm that God is three in one; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit. Throughout the history of the church various people have tried to explain this mystery. I am not going to try to explain the Trinity to you today, maybe Holton will take that up another week! But what I do want to say about the Trinity today is this; because of the Trinity, I believe we are set up to succeed at living the good life and to be transformed. The Trinity sets us up for success in living God's way, the good way. God the Father, sent Jesus, the Son, to live in the world to show us, in concrete human ways, how to live as Christians. And now, God the Holy Spirit remains with us to encourage us, help us and guide us every day. It is through the life of Jesus, that we can observe exactly where we need to spend our time, what it means to practice our faith, how it is possible to renew our minds, and be transformed into the people we are called to be.

When we look at Jesus' life, we observe three important and regular habits that he practiced. 1. He studied the Bible. He would have only had the Old Testament. But he studied it and he knew what it said. 2. He prayed. He talked to God in prayer and got clear about what he believed about God. 3. He lived his life by sharing the good news. The New Testament tells us story after story of what Jesus did during his 3-year ministry. Just like I am preparing for this triathlon; practicing and training by swimming, biking and running. We who want to follow Jesus, have to put effort into our training. We need spiritual practices so our minds can be transformed. This is a challenge for us because the world has a different set of goals for what it means to live the good life. Which of course, takes on a life of its own with particular activities, to make those things happen. If there is one thing I have learned again or been reminded of this past year; it is that we are finite beings. Our lives have a beginning.

*The following sermon has not been edited by the author; therefore, there may be discrepancies. When in doubt please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website.