



Dear Friend in Christ,

I am happy to share with you the next week of our autumn sermon series “The Whatabouts: Responding to Questions with Faithfulness.” This week’s question is “What about the Turn-or-Burn Hard Sell?” as we talk about Matthew 5, John 12, and the pain a hard sell can have on relationships.

Please use following phone numbers and links between 10:15am and 10:30am. You can join in one of two ways:

By computer, smart phone or tablet:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86757133623?pwd=OTFUQWJvU2lMMmR6bkY5SitpelR1UT09>

By Phone: 1 (312) 626 6799 ID 867 5713 3623,
Passcode 205879

(If you need a live link to the Worship link, you can go to the homepage of our website at www.vccbhm.org with the passcode 205879 OR click on “Zoom Links” then the Sunday Worship link.)

I look forward to seeing you on Sunday.

Christ’s and yours,
Pastor Eric

Valley Christian Church

Twenty-First Sunday After Pentecost

October 25, 2020

PRELUDE

"Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Faith is the assurance of things hoped for.
People: And the conviction of things not seen.
Leader: By faith, our ancestors received approval.
People: By faith, we understand that the worlds were prepared by the Word of God.
Leader: So that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.
People: Since we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe.

(Hebrews 11:1-3, 12:28, NRSV)

HYMN OF PRAISE

"My Hope is Built"

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name*

Refrain

*On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand*

*When darkness veils his lovely face
I rest on his unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil
(Refrain)*

*When he shall come with trumpet sound
O may I then in him be found
Dressed in his righteousness alone
Faultless to stand before the throne
(Refrain)*

INVOCATION

Eternal God, we gather today from all our houses to be in your house of prayer and sanctuary. We gather to be in your presence and to give you praise. May you bless this sacred and holy time of worship that we have set aside to devote to you today. Amen.

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

Gracious God, we seek your presence in so many places in our lives, yet we confess that we also sometimes miss you when you were in plain sight the entire time. In each day, may you make yourself known to us, as we strive to become better each day at knowing you. We ask for your blessing upon those whom we have named here today, as we lift them up to you by name now...

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:13-17 and John 12:44-50

MEDITATION

"The Whatabouts: What About the Turn-or-Burn Hard Sell?"
See Insert for Meditation

HYMN

"Tis the Gift to Be Simple"

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be
And when we find ourselves in the place just right
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight*

*When true simplicity is gained
To bow and to bend we will not be ashamed
To turn, turn, will be our delight
'Til by turning, turning we come round right*

(Repeat Both Verses)

SHARING OUR OFFERING WITH GOD

Share your financial offering with the church by mail or bring it by the church office. Thank you for your love gifts.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Ginny Guindon

CALL TO COMMUNION

May we remember how Jesus spoke to our deepest and greatest needs at this table, even as He faced His own time of greatest need in the hours to come

**COMMUNION
HYMN**

"Come and Find the Quiet Center"

*Come, find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead
Find the room for hope to enter
Find the frame where we are freed
Clear the chaos and the clutter
Clear our eyes that we can see
All the things that really matter, be at peace, simply be*

*In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain
Let our loves and fears unravel
Celebrate the space we gain
There's a place for deepest dreaming
There's a time for heart to care
In the Spirit's lively scheming there is room to spare*

**COMMUNION
PRAYER**

Conclude by praying together the Lord's Prayer

**HOLY
COMMUNION**

Partake of the holy communion (bread, juice, or whatever is available to you)

**WORDS OF
INSTITUTION**

Hear the words of Jesus when He said, "Take and eat, this is my body, broken for you. Take and drink, this is the cup of the covenant poured out for you."

BENEDICTION

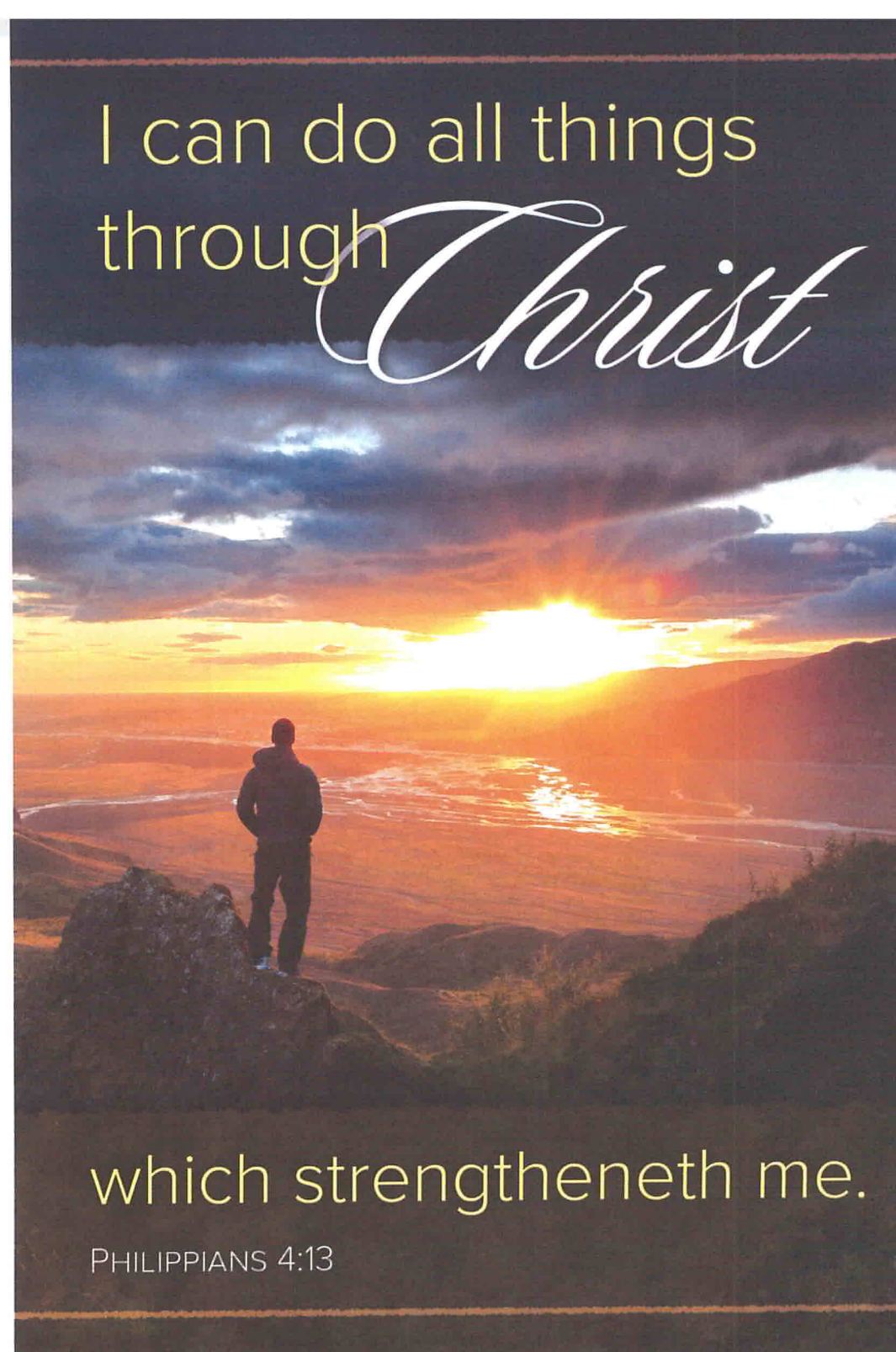
May the God who guided you along the path here now send you back out onto the path, always with a way forward through the power of the Holy Spirit. And may the blessing of the Lord be with you now and always. Amen.

POSTLUDE

"To God Be the Glory"

This Sunday's worship leaders

Leader and Elder: Ginny Guindon
Pianist: Margaret Cox
Minister: Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson



I can do all things
through *Christ*

which strengtheneth me.

PHILIPPIANS 4:13

MEDITATION

Sunday, October 25, 2020

“What About the Turn-or-Burn Hard Sell?” Matthew 5:13-17 & John 12:44-50

“The Whatabouts: Responding to Questions with Faithfulness,”
Week Seven

I still remember how nicely the conversation began—with cooing over my two dogs who are, objectively speaking, the cutest, most adorable doggos in the whole wide world.

And I remember how quickly the conversation nosedived after that—when the two door-to-door evangelists who showed up at our Vancouver townhouse asked me if I knew that we don’t need good works in order to be saved (spoiler alert: we do).

I explained to them that not only was I already a Christian, but that I was a pastor of a congregation—which usually stops door-to-door evangelists in their tracks, because I go from fresh chum to completely off-limits in a New York minute. To their credit, such evangelists had, up to this point, at least been unfailingly polite to me as I turned them down.

Not so here. Before long, I was told that what I was teaching was a heresy, that I was sending other people to hell, and that I myself would end up in hell if I died the next day.

I was rebuked in the name of the Lord (or, much more accurately, in the name of this person’s interpretation of the Lord) and told that when I die God will say to me, “Get away from me, I never knew you,” before the pair of evangelists left, but not before the other complimented me once again on how cute my dogs are, leaving me standing on my own doorstep, simultaneously agape and bemused at what had just transpired.

It wasn’t the first turn-or-burn hard sell I had been subjected to despite being a basket-to-casket Christian, and it surely will not be the last. But it is probably the best illustration I can offer of the

(over)

lack of fruit that comes from them, and how we can offer something much different, more loving, and more effective to people who are seeking right relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

This sermon series is my first as your new minister here at Valley, and I arrived at it after multiple conversations with the search committee about how and why evangelism came to be noted as so important a trait in the congregation’s search and call profile. And specifically what I heard was a need to be equipped to talk to people about faith in a way that could answer their questions—questions to which we may or may not have all the answers, or not feel comfortable answering.

The way I experienced doing evangelism on the West Coast would sometimes come in the form of fielding questions from folks skeptical of the nature of my faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ, and I came to think of those questions as “the whatabouts,” as in, “Well, what about...?” Being honest in those moments was vital for my own integrity and for my friendship with the person asking me. I crafted this sermon series to tackle many of these questions a way for me to share with you what evangelism has looked like to me and in my ministry, by trying to answer those whatabout questions, and as a way to let you into my own theology and faith.

Today’s whatabout question is, “What about the turn-or-burn hard sell?” It is a question I perhaps cope with disproportionately because some folks seem to almost expect it once they learn I’m a pastor (and have finished apologizing for whatever swears they uttered in front of me before learning of my vocation). It is almost expected that I would lay the guilt on thick for them.

How did we arrive at a place where the turn-or-burn hard sell from us would be treated almost as a given? What does it say about us and how we are perceived by others? And perhaps most importantly, what does it say about God and how we perceive God in someone else’s salvation?