

- Greetings to all the Saints at Manatee Life Church,
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SCRIPTURE:

Jeremiah 20:9 (CEB) – Larger reading: Jeremiah 20:7-18

“I thought, I’ll forget him; I’ll no longer speak in his name. But there’s an intense fire in my heart, trapped in my bones. I’m drained trying to contain it; I’m unable to do it.”

STORY:

As I contemplate the Jeremiah passage the image that comes to mind is that of Harry Denman who liked to introduce himself as “just a layman for Jesus”. Dr. Denman traveled the world sharing his faith with only a toothbrush, his black suit and a white shirt. Dr. Harry’s passion was Jesus Christ. One story out of the Leesburg’s Methodist Men’s Retreats was that Harry badly needed a haircut. So one afternoon he took off into town to finally get the much-needed haircut only to show back up at the retreat later that afternoon with his hair still very long. When asked about the hair he laughed and shared, “Well, when I got in the chair I just asked the barber if he knew Jesus Christ. One thing led to another and before too long every man in the shop was on his knees accepting Jesus Christ as their personal savior. I guess that I just forgot about getting a haircut.” You see, Harry’s passion was the souls of those men and not his hair.

OBSERVATION:

How do you approach your life? What “floats your boat” is one thing, but what propels the boat is a totally different and more powerful idea. The propelling engine to anyone’s life is his or her passion. Real passion is sometimes hard to find, but it is out there if one desires to look.

I think of John R. who was a pastor in Florida. His passion was fishing. Seldom did you see him without his fishing pole. He would come to pastor events at Leesburg so he could fish the lake. And then, there was the grandmother who began to pull out the pictures as you walked towards her and would pepper her conversations with the wonderful things that her grandchildren were doing.

I also think about a young man who use to came out from Atlanta with his folks. They lived across the street from our home in Temple, GA. He had been blind since birth. His passion was the Atlanta Braves. Steve knew every player who had ever played for the Braves. He knew all of the stats of the players, plus many of the stats for the teams that played the Braves. He was very passionate about the Braves. I now know of some individuals who are this way about the Tampa Bay Rays. Everything stops when the Rays games are being broadcast.

One of my brothers was passionate about golf. After he retired, because of health reasons, he got to express his passion by playing 18 holes with his buddies in the morning. Then he would come home, have lunch and then go back for another 18 holes with his wife. He did that for many months until his health wouldn't permit it any longer.

There is a former church staff member from my St. Luke's UMC days, who, along with his wife, is very passionate about swing dancing. You read his Facebook entries and they are all about the various swing dance events that they attend.

Passion – the propelling force in life. What is it for you?

As the prophet Jeremiah shares (cited above) his passion – an all consuming passion – when he shares: “But if I say, ‘Forget it! No more God-Messages from me!’ The words are fire in my belly, a burning in my bones. I’m worn out trying to hold it in. I can’t do it any longer!” (MSG)

Oh, to have that kind of all consuming passion for the Lord! To have Jeremiah's “fire in the belly” to preach the Good News at every opportunity! To have the propelling purpose in life that can consume one's time and energy!

QUOTE:

“I have but one passion; it is He, He only.” - Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf

PRAYER:

Set me on fire Lord, set me on fire with the passion so deep that people will gather to watch me burn. In the name of the Fire-starter Jesus Christ himself. Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim

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I pray that you enjoy today's worship as much as Stephanie, Sam and I did in recording it just for you.

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