

SUNDAY, October 20, 2024 Life Lessons

Job 38:1-7 Hebrews 5:1-10 Mark 10:35-45

What are life lessons? The 13th-century poet, Rumi wrote these words “Yesterday I was clever so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise so I am changing myself.” Modern writer, Omar Atani states: “If you want to change the trajectory of your life, embrace these rules and apply them: Commitment is what gets you started, consistency is what gets you somewhere, and persistence is what keeps you going.”

Everyone probably has learned something important about life and how to live it-- usually by accident, failure, or not knowing about something which needed to be explained. For example, as a child a parent would say don't touch the stove; yet the toddler would inevitably touch the stove to learn that it is hot and this heat can cook food, yes, but can also hurt fingers. But where do we learn about life and what it is all about?

Life may be difficult for many people because there are many challenges in 2024-- economic, food equity, wars, political divisiveness and other matters. But what is essential for living today has been taught to us for generations by our ancestors passing on their knowledge. These essentials for life also include matters that one must realize are not unique to one generation but have been existing since Creation. Some of these life lessons are taught to us as toddlers, other lessons are still being learned well into our 90's because life itself is filled with continuing education as the world continues to change and evolve.

Just think how much our technical knowledge has grown since 2020- because of the pandemic and the need to remain connected by computer, internet and the different ways of meeting. But this is not all for since then, our children and youth have had to learn how to be sociable because there was lost times of gathering and being in human company.

Recapping Job's story, we are reminded that he was a man who was righteous and good, wealthy with livestock and a big family. He was also respected by the community. At one point God and Satan discuss who is good and they test Job and his faithfulness to God. Job loses his property, children, and wealth but does not turn away from God. He experiences much suffering with sores and his friends come and be with him in his grief and question his faith wondering why he wouldn't turn from God. But, Job maintains his integrity and is committed to serving God. He states to his wife, shall we receive the good at the hand of the God and not receive the bad?

Questions and concerns are shared amongst the friends about life and what is worth having. And in the passage shared today, God answers Job not with boisterous explanations of who God is, but with questions that ask Job about life as he knew it through his faith in God. He is called to answer God's questions about what God has done but cannot explain. Job just accepts life and its challenges and yet is humbled and satisfied. He states, "I know that you can do all things, and no purpose of yours can be thwarted. .. I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you."

Job was faithful all his life and as a result of his faithfulness to God, his fortunes are restored twofold. Job received life lessons and was tested again and again. But what about our lives today? Does God test us? Do we respond in faith and hope, or do we wonder and walk away from God? Do we humble ourselves to serve or do we walk away.

There have been some difficult days for this church family in the last month as we grieve and mourn together a couple who faithfully served this church and today we will honour them with signs of living hope. But what about our service of God? Are we willing to live out life lessons in faith?

James and John talk with Jesus and tell him that they want Jesus to do something for them. Jesus asks, "What?" They ask, that they may sit on either side of him in your glory. But Jesus says you don't really know what you are asking? Yes you can drink what he has and be baptized but what they ask is not up to Jesus. When the rest of the disciples heard this discussion they grew angry with James and John. Why should they get the good spot? This is when Jesus teaches an important life lesson- whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant. And whoever wishes to be first among you must be servant of all. For Jesus came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many" Jesus came to serve others- and as his followers we are to do the same- serve others and be like Jesus.

Just what life lessons are we talking about here? Serving others and being like Jesus. Jesus offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death and he was heard. He learned obedience through his suffering and became our source of eternal life through this. HE is our high priest, the one who teaches us that life is a gift that is filled with ups and downs, gains and losses, struggles and joys as well as hope. Jesus cried out as he prayed for his followers to listen and watch and be ready. But they did not fully understand what was going to happen. Almost 2000 years later we are still learning about Jesus' life on earth, sharing his teachings of love with others and learning about life in all

its wonders and glory; and pain and suffering. But as Paul writes to the Romans (5:1-5) we who have faith are justified. We have peace with God through Jesus. For we have received grace and can boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. We can also boast in our sufferings because suffering produces endurance, endurance character, and character produces hope. And this is what we strive for - hope; this is what life's lessons lead us to- hope which will not disappoint us. Because it is through Jesus' death and resurrection we have hope.

Life's lessons begin when we are young and carry us through our whole lives. Life lessons abound. In poetry, reflections and music. Tim McGraw had a top country hit with the song "Always be Humble and Kind" whose lyrics were written by a mother of five kids Lori McKenna, who wanted to share her thoughts about what was important in life. One of the verses states:

*Hold the door say please say thank you
Don't steal, don't cheat, and don't lie I know you got mountains to climb but
Always stay humble and kind
When the dreams you're dreamin' come to you; When the work you put in is realized
Let yourself feel the pride but Always stay humble and kind.*

This song captures what is needed in life from each of us. Serving others in humility and being kind as we share our love in Christ Jesus. No matter what comes your way in life, remain humble and share your love and then offer hope. Life lessons abound but as followers and believers in Jesus Christ, the lessons of life he taught last us not only in this life on earth but prepare us to be welcomed home with him.

Let us remember what Jesus taught his disciples after James and John asked to sit beside Jesus. "Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all." Jesus served, was obedient to God, died on the cross and rose to new life so that we might live eternally with him.

We learn so much each day we live; but what we use this knowledge for enables our lives to be filled in new ways. We just need serve one another in kindness and offer hope.

Let us pray.

God of grace and love we pray that life's lessons will always be heard and acted upon in faith and with hope. Bless us we pray as we see to serve one another in kindness and hope. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

