

## **I AM The Lord Your God**

### **Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9; Philippians 3:4-14**

Last week Rev. Dr. Thomas Tewell shared – during the Finch Preaching Mission – that God is NOT our co-pilot, but rather should be the Pilot of our lives. He continued by saying that God cannot fly a parked plane and asking if God is the pilot, have we started the engine.

In the passage from Paul's Letter to the Philippians, Paul insists that he is striving to get for Christ to be the pilot of his life. For Paul, perseverance is a way to get closer to Christ. It means not looking back, but looking ahead toward Christ with single-minded purpose. Without throwing away his own religion, Paul throws away a theology which had made him important and given him great status. In its place he embraces Christ and Christ's way. Paul is essentially throwing away the shirt that says, "God is my Co-pilot" and seeking the bumper sticker that reads, "Christ is the pilot of this plane."

Rarely does the church admit mistakes. But maybe it is time for us to admit that we, the church, have domesticated Jesus. Made a milk cow out of a raging bull. Softened His call. Cheapened His grace. Made confusing His clarity. Worse of all, we've violated the eleventh commandment: Thou shall not make God boring! And if that is so, then, what has it cost Jesus? What has it cost the world and what has it cost us?

You see, if God is the co-pilot, then we control the height, the speed, we determine the path, the angle, the number of stunts our plane will be involved in. But if Christ is the pilot and we are allowing God to determine the path the speed, the altitudes, my, oh, my what a wild ride!

It's impossible to gauge how many people have come through the doors of our churches through the years, only to leave in disappointment. It's Impossible to gauge the number of people who came in open but left closed. My sense is that there are many. Perhaps they came seeking Christ as the pilot. Perhaps they had reached the point that Paul reached in his life, "I did it my way and made a mess of things. It's time to turn it over to God." But when they came inside they did not find the I AM! They found our particular flavor, the I'll walk beside you God. The church offered the weakened version, the one we could control rather than the one that is in control. We should admit that. God will forgive.

So, what do we do? To whom do we turn?

How about St. Paul? You remember his story. He never lacked passion. But his passion was perfected when he met the Risen Jesus on a dusty road. Until then Paul was going nowhere fast. After that meeting, everything Paul says and does is about one thing, trying to throw words and deeds at his experience of Jesus Christ.

That's the mark of actually meeting God, and making God the Lord, the pilot of your life, things get changed. What we think about God, ourselves and others, all change. Each of Paul's letters is about this. His confidence is the first thing that changes after meeting Jesus. Before, he had confidence in his pedigree, confidence in his willpower to keep the rules. He even had confidence in persecuting the church. But something happened. His confidence

shifted. Paul's balance sheet changed. Red has become black. What was gain is now loss. What was foolishness is now foundational. New insight is gained through faithful living. That's the way it happens best. You can almost hear him say, "God is in Christ and Christ is in me. It's true, God is trustworthy." Paul is clear now. There's a better confidence to have. God confidence! "There's value that surpasses all other value," and that is "knowing Christ Jesus...." (Phil 3.8)

I like how Paul doesn't try to placate his listeners. "Surpassing knowledge," he says. God is not relative. Pay attention; this God is real. The most real. This is what the church is called to in this present age; we are called to be bold. Bold in God because God has been bold in love toward us. We hold a gentle confidence while the inferior confidences of the world crack and crumble.

While our tendency as a church is to speak more of institutional life and issues and such, we could take a lesson from Paul. As we move forward, we strive for the goal, not alone, but with the assurance that God is with us. God is the pilot, God is the great I AM, God is the Lord of our lives.