

January 21, 2012 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
John 15:1-6 This Year—Get Out of Your Comfort Zone by Andy
McDonald

Last week we talked about a very local, right here on Sabbath morning mission service, a call for 100 people to leave our third service at 11:30 and attend the 10:15 service to open seats for new people who might come to our 11:30 service that they might easily find a seat. We also invited these missionaries and any who might attend any of our service, to join them and park across Orange Avenue reserving the spaces closest to our door for new people and those needing handicap parking.

The commitment cards are in your hand and if you prayerfully consider this need and are willing to move out of third service into second, I invite you to sign a card to give that a try from now through March! It is important to put your name on the card and to note if you are signing up for more than yourself that you put other names by yours who are doing this with you.

God wants to grow his church and sometimes, as I'm going to talk about this morning, that will call for us to go beyond our comfort zone all for the sake of God's kingdom enlarging. Growing changes things and calls for sacrifice and demands that we go beyond our comfort zone. So please, if this is the right thing for you, you aren't involved with a Sabbath School class, sign up for trying this out from now until after our church retreat. Sign up and just leave your card with an usher as you exit the worship center. Thanks.

Now as I begin today's message I just want to acknowledge up front my debt to Andy Stanley and a sermon he preached on this very passage that has had a strong influence on God's message for us today.

There's a great illustration that explains what it is like when we have what I first heard Bill Hybels call a defining moment. A defining moment is when we have one of those ah ha! Kind of experiences. We see something in a new light, so much so that it may even seem to us as

a new truth, but really it is eternal truth that shines this light of truth in our faces.

It is easy to imagine what this is like because we live in the sunshine state. I mean it happens a bunch to us who live here in Florida.

It's like when we are in a room or car where the lighting is subdued, maybe a little dim and we get our eyes adjusted and we can see just fine. There is plenty of light to go about our tasks. And then there's some moment when we must open our door and step outside. And now the bright light of the sun hits our eyes and for a moment we are blinded by the light. We squint. We put our hand up to block the light. We may even close our eyes. And at that moment the easiest thing would be for us to retreat, to step back into our comfort zone where our eyes were comfortable with a degree of darkness.

Listen it happens just like that when all of a sudden God shines truth into our lives. Just like when you get up in the night to go to the bathroom and you can see how to navigate from the small amount of ambient lighting. You pupils are wide open and finally you enter the bathroom and shut the door and flick on the light and it is like you are momentarily blind. I've been known to turn the light back off because the light was just too much to bear. Then with my eyes closed turn it on and let my closed eyes allow the light that penetrates through my eyelid to slowly be adjusted.

Today some of you may have a defining moment as we proceed through our passage. When all of a sudden God doesn't behave just like we wish or expect or have been taught—there can come a defining moment and that bright light of truth will cause us to either run back to our comfort zone of darkness or we can bravely face that light until our eyes adjust and we can walk in the light.

Our Bible passage for today, the story we will explore, is a story where Jesus turns on a very bright light, where truth is revealed, and there is a clear defining moment.

Open your Bibles to Mark 10:17-23. This same story is found in the book of Matthew 19, and Luke 18. Here we find a real life calling to go beyond one's comfort zone.

Jesus had just finished blessing the children and now we come to vs 17 "As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him, 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'"

This story we usually call the story of the Rich Young Ruler. All three gospel accounts tell us he was rich, but only Matthew mentions his being young and only Luke says he was ruler. We've put the three together and called him the rich young ruler.

It is likely that he was on the periphery of the crowd watching as Jesus has just blessed the children. His own youthfulness is evident in that fact that he runs up to Jesus. Respected elders would never "run" that was something the elders didn't do.

This young guy, as we'll see more fully in a moment, was very much a religious guy. I imagine that as he saw the children being blessed he wanted that blessing too. His whole young life he's been working the system, following the rules, seeking a blessing, a blest life. Life has been good. He's made good money. He's known for his exemplary life. He's always thought that God has blest him and that is what God should do. He is clear that he wants God to be on his side giving an advantage a positive edged to all he does. He's got it all but at night when he is alone in the darkness, all his performance hasn't produced peace. He senses that he doesn't quite have it, whatever "it" is in his bag. There is no assurance in him that he will inherit eternal life.

So he falls at Jesus feet and asks, "Good teacher, what must I do, **WHAT MUST I DO** to inherit eternal life?"

As is so typical of the conversations of Jesus he doesn't answer the question asked but even early on in this conversation he begins to shine the light.

Vs. 18, "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone." (Are making an implication? Are you call me God?) Jesus continues, "You know the commandments: Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother."

"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." It is like the guy is saying, "Jesus, I've got that covered. I've been working the system, following the rules, obeying the commandments."

I find it interesting that the commandments that Jesus quotes to him are those connected with our personal relationships our attitude to our fellow humans. Jesus is setting him up for a defining moment. He's about to challenge him to go beyond his comfort zone. Jesus knows this guy has problems with relationships with other people. Jesus knows that his life is all about self advancement, self righteousness, self security. He's sure he has God in his pocket, but still he has no peace.

Vs 21 "Jesus looked at him and loved him."

Jesus looked at this wealthy young ruler and he loved him. He had great hopes for this guy. He wanted to protect him. He wanted him to rejoice in the truth. Jesus wanted this guy.

These words, "Jesus looked at him and loved him." Were true for every person Jesus looked at while he walked our world. And they are true of every person his all seeing eye sees right now. He looks at us and he loves us—there is not one ounce of animosity, not one ounce of disdain, despite our choices. HE LOOKS AT ME AND HE LOOKS AT YOU and He loves us!

Jesus is about to shine some really bright light on this guy and it is all only because he loves him and wants him.

Here's this successful, respected, young leader who seems to have life by the tail, but who in his inward moments is unsure about eternal life being his. He's come to Jesus to find out the missing ingredient. It is like he's saying, "I've done everything just right, but I know there's this one more thing I must do in order to inherit eternal life. And Jesus if you tell me that one thing, I will do it not just at some common level, I'll do it like it has never been done before. I'm going to wow you. I'm going to really perform.

Jesus said, Ok. Vs 21 "One thing you lack." This guy is on the proverbial edge of his seat. He's poised. Maybe he has his note book ready to jot this down. He's almost shaking with anticipation of getting this final "one thing" right in order to put God in his debt.

Jesus says, "One thing you lack. Go sell everything you have (WHAT? He's stunned.) and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me!"

From total darkness of his former life this young guy just stepped into a brighter brilliance than the noon day sun. And it is an uncomfortable moment. For a split second all the world stands still. No time seems to pass. What will he do? Will he bravely adjust his life to the light? Will he bravely go beyond his comfort zone? Or is this light just a bit too bright and so he will retreat to the comfort of where his eyes were adjusted to the darkness and turn from the light?

Jesus was inviting this rich young ruler to become a disciple. He was inviting him to trust God and use his wealth instead of trusting his wealth and trying to use God.

It is so much less brilliant, it is so much more comfortable to live in a place of darkness to trust our comfort zone and try and use God for our purposes than it is to leave our comfort zone and use our gifts and

resources and education and status and intelligence but TRUST God, to let our eyes our lives adjust to his light instead of retreating to our comfort zone.

What did this rich young leader choose” vs. 22 “And this man ‘s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.”

When that light shone in his life there was a revelation of whose he really was. He didn’t really live surrendered to God as he obeyed the rules. He lived for himself. And he had obtained a bunch of stuff and money and resources and he thought they were his but he was really theirs. He belonged to his stuff.

In the brilliance of Jesus’ revelation this guy was called to accountability for trusting in his great wealth. That day the reality was revealed that he didn’t so much have great wealth as his great wealth had him?

I’ve heard talks and read articles where the conclusion of this story, the moral of this story is t that if we wish to be true followers of God we must sell all our stuff and give it to the poor and then we can really follow Jesus.

I think Jesus had this story included in the gospels because he knows that nothing competes for our loyalty and worship like our stuff. Material wealth and possessions. And if we are followers of God every so often God challenges us with a call, an opportunity, a need to which he wishes us to give. Not because he needs our money. Not because a person or a cause needs our money, he brings us to a cross road of holding and hoarding or letting go of moving beyond our comfort zone of security in our possessions just to do a little check up and see whose we really are.

I mean we sit here today and most of us claim to be followers of Jesus. Jesus, in this story is clearly saying that eternal life is more than just unlimited time—it is about relationships and is our relationship with

him supreme in our lives or our relationship with our stuff supreme. And there's really only one way to know. It isn't comfortable but where is our trust?

Do we have confidence to face the future because of our 401k or our savings, or our portfolio, or anything we think we "have" or do we have confidence to face the future because of our relationship with God through Jesus Christ?

Jesus prayed clearly these words in John 17:3 "Now this is eternal life; that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

Jesus didn't come to set up a new list of rules to follow or hurdles to jump. He didn't come to lay out a system of ethics. He came to establish relationships. Eternal life is all about relationships.

And the rich young ruler was looking for a way of performance salvation. He wouldn't be saved because he sold all of his stuff and gave it to the poor. His salvation is in his following Jesus. The supreme relationship of his life being Jesus and not his stuff.

I believe as followers of Jesus every once in a while Jesus brings us opportunities to give away some of our stuff, our money our possessions our wealth. And when that impression to give comes it like bright light is shining and we either adjust to the light and let go of some of our stuff or we retreat to the comfort of our darkness holding on to our possessions as our security blanket.

It is really important to go with the call of God. It is really important to go with the call of God. I remember being raised with the clear teaching that the money that comes into our hands isn't ours in the sense of ownership, it is only ours in the sense of responsibility of stewardship. That EVERYTHING is God's and I just have the privilege of managing it.

And if we really believe this then at those moments when God impresses us to give something to someone in need, or to support a cause or to sacrifice something we had planned in order to make a difference for someone else, we have defining moments that call us to go beyond our comfort zone.

Sometimes we may live under the illusion that once we give back to God 10% of our increase that the 90% is ours to do with as we please and every now and then God will call on us to let go of a chunk of that 90% as a safety check, as an opportunity to make sure we are trusting God and using resources instead of trusting resources and trying to use God.

And listen it isn't about the amount. To share a dime out of a dollar and to do it wasn't a huge light, and then to meet some need with 10 or 20 dollar bill not so huge when you've got hundreds, and sharing hundreds out of thousands, but somehow we begin to wonder if sharing 10's or 100's of thousands is more.

It isn't about the amount. The question is simply who's are you. Do you belong to your stuff, your money, your assets or do you belong to God. And if you are his and all your stuff is his then when he needs it some other place you let it go—after all your' just the manager.

We've begun 2012 with the series "This Year" because there's no other place the devil can so easily get a foot hold as with the whole area of money, consumerism and possessions.

The first of our series was This Year—work for one boss. You can't serve God and money, you can't serve God and self-interest so just choose to work for one boss—the God of the universe who can supply all your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus.

Last week was This Year—take a break and the break is from that incessant hunger for more. Take a break from self interest and consumerism and me, me, me, and organize your life to let go and serve.

And today This Year—go beyond my comfort zone. Our comfort isn't necessarily in our best interest. When the light of who God is shines with amazing brilliance it may be so great we may seek refuge and retreat to our comfort zone—that is easiest, or we may decide to stay in the light adjust and when God calls us to let go of some of our stuff we can make that choice because we trust God and use money. This year when you feel impressed, called, disturbed, remember to go beyond your comfort zone and let go of some of the stuff in your care you'll be demonstrating who you really are, as you trust God and use money.

This year work for one boss, take a break and go beyond your comfort zone.