



Take the Adventure the Lord has for You!

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Vienna Presbyterian Church

Acts 9:10-17

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To those of us here in the Sanctuary, welcome home. It's wonderful to see one another and to be near one another again. At the same time, many of us continue to join online for worship and our loving Lord is wonderfully with us wherever we are!

Our elders have engaged church consultant Tod Bolsinger to help us prepare for the adventure that is the arrival of our new pastor, Hope Lee. To that end, we will be doing some "active listening" this summer and we really want to hear your ideas about the future of *your* church. A first step is a very brief survey that Tod has used with numerous churches that you'll receive by email. It should only take you a few moments and your response will be a critical start for us. There will be more opportunities for conversation as the summer progresses. We are excited about the future and really appreciate your time and thoughtful ideas.

As part of our Adventure series, we are looking forward to a special evening of "Looking for Adventure" on Wednesday, June 23. We will join in a congregational gathering on Zoom at 8 p.m. for a conversation with Hope Lee as we get to know her and we will spend some time connecting with each other and our Lord!

We are talking about adventure this summer – that the Lord of our adventure is Jesus, the Lord who loves us and in whom we trust. When we are on the cusp of adventure, we ask God’s Holy Spirit for strength and guidance. Our adventures in life may be may be marvelous or miserable. Yesterday, on Facebook, I followed the wedding of the daughter of dear friends. A wonderful adventure! Today is the 77th anniversary of D-Day, an adventure that was rather difficult, yet in every single adventure we experience the interior adventure of the soul as we learn to trust our good Lord in every moment of every day.

Of course, some of our adventures border on the silly. One person spoke about starting a new diet and said, “I altered my drive to work to avoid passing my favorite bakery. I accidentally drove by the bakery this morning and as I approached, there in the window were chocolates, donuts, and cheesecakes. I felt this was no accident, so I prayed... ‘Lord, it’s up to You. If You want me to have any of those yummy goodies, create a parking place for me directly in front of the bakery.’ And sure enough, on the eighth time around the block, there it was! God is so good!”

¹ Some of our adventures are silly, others are rather more profound.

This morning we look at the story of a man named Ananias and the fascinating adventure that God gave to him. Reading from Acts, Chapter 9, “Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias.” [We learn immediately that Ananias is a follower, a disciple of Jesus.] “The Lord said to Ananias in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ And Ananias said, ‘Here I am, Lord’” (Acts 9:10). I love that, “Here I am, Lord.” In the Old Testament we see many times God speaks to somebody or another and their response is, “Here I am.” The original Hebrew word for that is *hineni* (hen-nai’-nee). God called the boy, Samuel, who replied, “*hineni*,” here I am. God called Abraham and Abraham replied, “*hineni*.” *Hineni* means more than just physical presence, that I am “here.” It means, “I’m available, Lord, what may I do for you? How may I serve you today?” “Here I am” means all of me is here, available to serve you. When God called Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, all of them replied, “*Hineni*,” here I am!

“The Lord said to Ananias in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ And Ananias said, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ And the Lord said to him, ‘Rise and go... look for a man named Saul...’ But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil [and havoc (9:21)] he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem’” (Acts 9:11-13). Suddenly, Ananias isn’t feeling very *hineni*. He’s feeling very *hinen-no*! God is giving him adventure and both the external

adventure of finding Saul and the internal adventure of his soul are feeling real threatened. “But the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go...’” (Acts 9:15). There are times when your adventure is going to be tough, but the adventure is not removed. Jesus prayed to his Father to remove the cup of suffering, but it was not removed. Like Jesus, we trust God as we take any adventure, the rough one and the fun one!

I was unable to visit the Arlington National Cemetery last Monday, as I like to do on Memorial Day, but if you do go on Memorial Day, people are there with buckets of roses so that you may take some to lay on the tombstones of your beloved ones. It’s a very moving way to remember and to honor them. Last Monday I was reflecting on some dear ones in my life who are buried at Arlington when out of the blue, my friend Dick Feiertag came to mind. Dick isn’t buried at Arlington, he’s very much alive! He is a Vietnam vet who was repeatedly exposed to the toxic chemical Agent Orange, which has led to significant physical discomfort today.

So, I called Dick just to say he was on my mind. “How are you feeling, Dick?” “Not well,” he replied. “A lot of discomfort.” I know he experiences real pain every single day. But then he went on to say, “It (his discomfort) reminds me to put a check on my attitude. Life is about trusting in Jesus. Life is about giving Jesus to others.” Wow! Dick takes

the adventure our Lord has for him every single day. His external adventure, coping with his hurting body, is a tough go. It's hard. His internal adventure, trusting Jesus, soars. It is just as Paul wrote, "We do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16).

What does it mean to "take the adventure"? To take it is to seize it, grab it, and grip it. Take it on, bring it on, whatever it is, because whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. We pray, "Lord, whatever this adventure is going to be on the exterior, whatever joys and whatever heartache may challenge the interior of my soul, I am going to trust and follow you." What adventure does God have for you? A job to do, an illness to cope with, a relationship to heal, a trip to make, a friendship to continue? Think about how that adventure gives you the opportunity for the still greater interior adventure of the soul, trusting God with every detail and every moment of your life.

"But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Go.' So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on Saul he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 9:15). Ananias had his qualms but he took the

adventure his Lord had for him and launched Saul on his adventure.

Years ago, a friend of mine by the name of Ben Johnson was Professor of Christian Spirituality at Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta. Ben ran a modest Christian publishing company by the name of CTS Press. One day the phone rang and I was delighted to hear Ben's voice. After we chatted for a bit, Ben said, "Stan, I am retiring from my work at the seminary and I am going to sell CTS Press." I replied, "Really?" as it was a surprise to me, and then he said, "And Stan, I am going to sell it to you." I said, "What? What, if I don't want it?" He replied, "You heard me. I am selling it to you."

I said, "Ben, I know a thing or two about being a pastor but I don't know a thing about publishing, marketing, accounts payable, accounts receivable, shipping, and so on. I've got to pray about this." He said, "Fine, you pray about it, and then I am selling it to you." Morning after morning I would wake up at 5 a.m. I never wake up at 5 a.m. I'd wake up in a cold sweat. Could I do it? Should I do it? Where will I get the money to buy it? Who would manage it? After six weeks of stewing, I was lying awake one morning thinking, if I keep waking up this uptight, can this be the will of God? Suddenly, out of the blue and completely unbidden came

these words to mind, “Take the adventure the Lord has for you!”

I knew instantly that those words were a quote from *The Chronicles of Narnia*, stories like The Voyage of the Dawn Treader that I mentioned a couple of weeks ago. Whenever the leading characters in Narnia are given a task, a difficult, even terrifying task, they say to one another, “Let us take the adventure Aslan has for us.” For in Narnia, Aslan the Lion is the same as our Lord Jesus Christ. And they would move out trusting the Lion to be with them. It’s not just take the adventure; it’s not just tackle the opportunity or the challenge. It’s take the adventure with the Lord. The real adventure is the interior adventure of the soul, trusting Jesus and facing life with courage, regardless of the circumstances of the adventure. I said, “Yes, Lord.” We obtained CTS Press and as it turned out, the process was every bit the headache I imagined it might be. However, that press became the foundation of an organization that launched my work consulting with churches. God knew what God was doing, even when I did not.

The truth is whatever your adventure may be, the apostle Paul puts it in perspective from Romans 14, “For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die

for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord (Romans 14:7-8). The greatest adventure is the interior adventure of the soul: trusting God and following Jesus Christ. There is no greater adventure than that!

Some years ago, Ben Patterson and three of his friends climbed Mount Lyell, the highest peak in Yosemite National Park. Ben says, “The climb to the top and back was to take the better part of a day, due to the difficulty of the glacier we had to cross to get to the top. The morning of the climb we started out chattering and cracking jokes.

“As the hours passed, the two more experienced mountaineers opened up a wide gap between me and my less-experienced companion. Being competitive by nature, I looked for a shortcut to beat them to the top. I thought I saw one to the right of an outcropping of rock and thirty minutes later I was trapped on top of the Lyell Glacier. I was only about ten feet from the safety of a rock, but one little slip and I wouldn’t stop sliding until I landed in the valley floor some fifty miles away! It was nearly noon, and the sun had the glacier glistening with slippery ice. I was stuck and scared.

“It took an hour for my experienced climbing friends to find me. One of them leaned out and used an ice ax to chip two little footsteps in the glacier. Then he said, ‘Ben, you

must step out from where you are and put your foot where the first foothold is. When your foot touches it, without a moment's hesitation swing your other foot across and land it on the next step. When you do that, reach out and I will take your hand and pull you to safety.'

“That sounded real good to me. It was the next thing that scared me. ‘But listen carefully: As you step across, do not lean into the mountain! If anything, lean out a bit. Otherwise, your feet may fly out from under you, and you will start sliding down.’” Ben said, “My instincts were to lie down and hug the mountain, to become one with it, not to lean away from it! But that was what my good friend was telling me to do.” Now at that point there were two voices in Ben’s head. His own voice saying, “*Hinen-no!* Lean into the mountain, become one with it,” and the voice of his friend, “Take the adventure. Lean out, step out and reach out your hand.” You know those two voices, the voice of our Lord saying, “Take the adventure I have for you,” and some other voice speaking fear into our hearts. We have a critical decision to make in life. Which voice will you follow?

Ben said, “For a moment, based solely on what I believed to be the good will and good sense of my friend, I decide to say no to what I felt, to stifle my impulse to cling to the security of the mountain, to lean out, step out, and

traverse the ice to safety. It took less than two seconds to find out if my faith was well-founded.”²

No matter what you and I face in life, it is good to remember our Lord is loving and faithful. Can we trust God? Absolutely! So lean out, step out, lean on your Lord. No matter what adventure comes your way, remember the words of Jesus, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Trust God, trust also in me” (John 14:1) and you’ll know the presence and reality of the loving God from the beginning of the adventure to its end. Take the adventure the Lord has for you! *Hineni!*

² Ben Patterson, [Waiting](#).