



**November 18, 2007**

Preaching: Rev. Ronni Verboom

2 Thess. 3:6-13(RSV)

## “Weariness and Well-Doing”

Ever have one of those days when you leave home late because the garbage disposal malfunctioned grinding up the orange peels from breakfast, spewing morsels around the kitchen, only to arrive at work to discover you had forgotten an important early morning meeting? Have you worked through lunch, only to find a desperate message from your wife, who is visiting her family in Missouri? “Honey, the school called me on my cell phone--- Tommy is in the nurse’s office after vomiting in the cafeteria. He has no clean clothes and he seems to be running a fever. They phoned the folks listed on our emergency contact sheet, and they can’t reach anyone. You have to call them right away!!!” After a call to the school, where it is verified that you have to “come get Tommy right away”, you stop by to inform your boss, who is concerned that you haven’t yet e-mailed her the figures you promised to send last week. Letting her know you’ll be on top of it tomorrow, you head to the parking lot. After collecting Tommy, you help him change out of his smelly clothing and settle him on the couch in front of a Veggie Tale video. Finding some tomato soup in the kitchen you plan an easy dinner of soup and grilled cheese sandwiches. Thank goodness your fifteen year old daughter knows she needs to be home during the evening, because you have an important meeting at church beginning at 7 p.m. When she comes through the door after her drill team practice, you give her a hug and put the hot soup and sandwiches on the table. Tommy is only having ginger ale and saltines. After one spoonful of soup, your daughter gags, saying, “Dad, what did you do to the soup?” A quick investigation reveals that the milk you added is ten days past the “sell by” date. At this point your daughter rushes to the bathroom, and you hear sounds that lead you to conclude she may have the same bug her brother does. You call the committee chair of your church commitment to say you’ll have to stay home, only to discover

HE was hoping YOU would lead the meeting because he's unable to attend. You offer to help him phone committee members to cancel the meeting and re-schedule it later.

Ever have a day like that? Liz Lopez-Spence, a United Methodist clergywoman has. In response to the denomination's encouragement to pastors to "nurture" their spirits, she writes, *In reflecting on my life in the last five years as a single parent of two very active children and pastor of a 500 member church with a staff of five, "nurture" has not been a common word of action in my vocabulary and life. Who has time to nurture oneself amidst worship, planning, meetings, errands, school, homework, hospital visits, band concerts, PTA, karate lessons, UMYF, conference obligations, grocery shopping, mowing the lawn, the vet, clergy meetings and commitments, parent-teacher conferences.... Need I go on?"*

Have you been weary? Worn out and weary? I am sometimes very weary. I know what it is to be weary as a parish pastor, a wife, mother and grandmother living with one adult son and a young grandson. I may not know your weariness, but I know you have times of feeling weary and heavy-laden. Some of us are weary with too much doing. Some of us are weary with not enough doing, or doing that is only chores and not meaningful or rewarding. Some of us are weary with doing that drives us, trying to reach unattainable goals. Some of us are weary with doing things to protect us from inner voices, or truths we don't want to face. Some of us are weary with coping, as life throws us one trauma after another.

In the midst of all this weariness, we hear the apostle Paul, writing to the church in Thessalonica, yet also speaking to us. He exhorts us to WORK and to persevere in doing good. "Brothers and sisters," he implores, "do not be weary in well-doing."

Gee. How are we supposed to manage that? I'd like to march right up to Paul and ask him to explain.

As I've studied and prayed about this, I think I have been given some insight. First, Paul was writing to a community that was convinced the Lord would return very soon—if not in the next few months, surely in a year or two. They decided to put down their tools, fold their arms and wait—very possibly depending on others for their food and shelter in the meantime. Paul, appalled by this behavior, clearly stated it is WRONG to sit around doing nothing, expecting others to take care of you! He pointed out that even with his huge involvement in preaching and starting churches, he himself worked to pay for his personal needs.

Second, I am reminded that Paul is emphasizing a vital point for all Christians: If we follow Christ we CANNOT become weary of well-doing, because it's part of

our job description. It's one of the things God created us to do—and at the heart of Christian discipleship.

How does this play out in our lives? How does this unfold here in our church? We know we must serve the church if we are to be faithful Christians. But serving the church can become a tremendous chore, a strenuously demanding series of needs to be met. It's a duty that drains and wears us down.

Our denominational newspaper, The United Methodist Reporter, presented a powerful statement by one of our bishops, Sharon Brown Christopher. She said that we keep confusing the means and the ends. We think we need to serve the church as an END in itself--- to keep the congregation together, to make Sunday mornings happen, to do all that's necessary for the building and so on. But the bishop affirmed that approach is backwards. We don't serve the church as an END; we participate in the church SO THAT WE CAN SERVE CHRIST IN THE WORLD. The church is the MEANS for us to serve God in our daily lives. We are not called to be full of stress making Sunday morning worship and learning happen; we come to church on Sunday SO THAT we gain rest, inspiration, refueling, challenge and power to go out and live our faith. The church is not an end in itself, but the means to an end: our participation in God's salvation and healing of all creation.

Friends, I believe our weariness arises when we don't bother to involve God in our lives day by day. Here at church we may focus on God, listen to his Word, and open our minds and hearts to his messages. But as soon as we leave here we allow the clamor of noisy demands to rule us. These sweep us through each day, and we are completely depleted by nightfall. The call to read Scripture, pray and rest in God's spirit is not as loud. If we do hear that call, we may think, "Oh, I'm so busy today, I can't do that today, maybe tomorrow." But putting off the things that help and heal us, because we are TOO BUSY TO DO THEM, leaves us weary and unwilling to engage in the "well-doing" God wants from us.

When my husband and I were actively involved in Marriage Encounter ministries, we participated in a practice called "one ringers". You would phone another couple out of the blue, and just let the phone ring once, before disconnecting. When we'd hear that one ring, we know someone was praying for us, thinking of us, rooting for us. It was very meaningful.

I'm going to propose something like that for us. I will describe this in the next Carillon, so that everyone knows about it. Spread the news to others you know who aren't present today. Let's call each other when we are praying for someone or thinking about them. And when we hear that one ring we will know a brother or

sister in Christ cares about us. Let's have those "one ringers" remind us to STOP WHAT WE ARE DOING for a moment of prayer. By doing this we can help each other REMEMBER that GOD is in each day, in each moment, and wants us to turn to him for strength, wisdom and guidance. ESPECIALLY when we are busy. ESPECIALLY when we are weary.

God **will help** us not become weary of well-doing. Without him we're in trouble. With him we can do miracles. MAY THIS BE SO! AMEN!

(Remind congregation of commitment cards and the information meeting to begin in the sanctuary at 10 a.m. Point out that our financial goals this year require us to do a MIRACLE WITH GOD'S HELP. Point out that our commitments to prayer and presence are essential for us to avoid weariness and for us to fulfill our commitments to GIVE and SERVE through our church. Invite Beth Belich to speak, mentioning how the work **that** team- the Board of Trustees- has already accomplished is something of a MIRACLE already.)