

“Do What It Takes”
Shepherding Series 8/8
August 18, 2013

Ephesians 4:1-5:2

¹ I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. ⁷ But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people." ⁹ (When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴ We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. ¹⁷ Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ That is not the way you learned Christ! ²¹ For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. ²² You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. ²⁶ Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not make room for the devil. ²⁸ Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. ²⁹ Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. ³¹ Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, ³² and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ² and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Here we are on our last sermon in this wonderful series. Last week we had a fantastic message given by our own Valorie Sullivan entitled "Remember" as I was away at the Disciples Women's Ministries and Christian Women's Fellowship for North Carolina Regional Retreat. I am so thankful for her and the message she shared. She brought us one step further in our series. Because we have for the past 8 weeks been hearing a lot about SHEPHERDing and its importance in a congregation. We honestly get so few opportunities in ministry to take extensive time on one particular topic and all its facets in our sermons. I have thoroughly enjoyed this series because we as a church have been able to

explore what it means to be a Shepherd in almost every sense of the word. We have explored Show Up, Hear Them, Encourage, Pray, Help, Example, Remember, and today we are exploring Do What It Takes.

This is our final sermon in this series, and it is completely appropriate and what we need to end on. I bless the person who developed the pneumonic device I have been utilizing to do this series. Do What It Takes. Do What It Takes. Let us linger here for a moment on those words. Do What It Takes. Selah

Our scripture from Ephesians comes at an interesting point in the book of Ephesians. Most scholars agree that Ephesians is divided into two subparts: the Theological section and the Ethical section. This is a familiar division throughout the epistles. Romans has a similar division as do Galatians and Colossians. The letters begin with the belief and why we believe what we believe and then there is a subtle or sometimes explicit shift from belief to practice. This is where we are with our scripture today. Ephesians is perhaps the most delineated of the epistles and our scripture today is where we shift from belief to practice. Paul's words in various translations, urge, beg, implore. All these words say essentially the same thing; that we need to move beyond our beliefs and practice our faith.

Taking our belief into practice; so much easier said than actually done. But we would not be Christians if we did not live in this dichotomy. We live in this. We live in the struggle and the striving to be like Christ in this world. We live with the daily struggle to not sin, to be unified together. To be part of one body of believers in unity loving all whom we meet. We know what we have to do. The struggle is actually doing it.

Just do it. Not only an iconic Nike slogan but a way we can live in our faith. That is the entire premise of the slogan. To stop thinking and to just get up and do it; while Nike was referring to physical activities and exercise we in the church can utilize the same principle, Just Do It, Do What It Takes to live out our faith. I think we sometimes think too much, we question ourselves and we ask if what we are doing is okay. We do not want to be too much, too overwhelming or smothering of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We do not also want to be rejected by our displays of Christ's love. So we stop ourselves. We hold back and limit ourselves in what we can do.

I think, in fact I am fairly assured that that is why we struggle so much daily living out our faith. We fear rejection of others because of our belief. We know in our heads and in our hearts what is true but to actually live it out to actually stand up and shout to the world every single day by every single action and every single word we say that we are Christians as a noun, a verb, an adjective, our title, who we are from the inside out.

We in so many ways can't. It breaks us, body and soul and then we learn to live within that brokenness and we settle for that brokenness. But that is not good enough. We can not settle. We have to strive to live like Christ. We have to do what it takes. We are our own stopping blocks and walls. We prevent ourselves from stepping out and living as we have been called to live.

Most of us spend our whole lives just being one aspect of Christian. The not trying to ruffle any feathers, keeping ourselves out of trouble, go to Church on Sunday, Choir on Wednesday and pray before all meals and before bed Christian. We live out the theological, the knowledge part of what it takes. But Christ did not stop at telling us what to believe, Christ called us into action due to our beliefs. Those actions are so significant in being both a Shepherd and Sheep.

As Shepherds we are called to Show Up, because everyone everywhere has need of us. Hear Them, by throwing out our pre conceived notions and ideas and truly listen to what is being said and unsaid. Encourage, by seeing others through the eyes of Christ, seeing their potential and not just what they are already doing. We need to Pray, and we need to pray often, lifting one another up to the Glory of God because we are glorious created by God in all our uniqueness and wonder. We need to Help out of love not just for God, but because God's love has transformed us in our

love of one another. We need to be an Example, be Christ's letter of recommendation on this Earth by our very lives. We need to Remember, to be open and giving and a part of one another's lives.

We need to Do What It Takes, whatever it takes to be as we have been called to be. I can say it over and over again until I am blue in the face, out of breath and this voice completely gone. But what I say does not matter to anyone but me in light of Shepherding and who we are called to be by God. I am only accountable to myself and to God. So it is on you. It is what you do with what you read, hear, and see as Shepherds and Sheep that matters. Do What It Takes. Amen.