

Sunday's message was brought to us by our Pastor Bish...

This just in...

Each time I attend church it is to first of all give. We are called to River Valley Vancouver. But Paul's words come to mind to temper that calling,

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong — that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

Romans 1:11-12 NIV

Mutual encouragement... mutually beneficial? Its amazing to me how I cannot get so much as two paragraphs in without scripture coming to mind LOL

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:18-21 NIV

I'm 61 years old. I have it written down elsewhere...

John's gospel has been so precious to me. I've read it over and over again. I've studied in small groups. I've read books about it. This passage from John's gospel,

All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:25-26 NIV 1984

Has been a promise that God has kept over and over for me. Back in the early days of searching and listening to him - naively believing that I could read his word on my own, and come to know him on my own - these verses have always been my assurance! I was connecting with the living and active God who loved me. I'm 61 now. At what point did I decide that I know all about God now, and don't need anyone to hold my hand? I might just have realized that I've thought that such a day would one day come!

I've had many mentors. I've had many doubters pour their doubt into me. I've had many a poor soul flee in the other direction yelling "YIPE YIPE YIPE..."

... have I (foolishly) had in the back of my mind the expectation that I wouldn't be holding anyone's hand anymore? That the day would come - when I get big enough and old enough - I'll be able to go it alone. Yet, where in the Bible can I support such a notion?

Well, I'll go on that tangent sometime, for now I wanna get back to Pastor Bish's sermon. He mentioned our calling, but he also gave the exhortation to not be weird.

It's nothing unusual for me to argue with the preacher, while he's preaching. In this case I actually raised my hand when he asked us all if we knew anybody who'd weird. I was going to stand up and bow that very Banner over me.

I am weird.

As I listened to the kind of weird he was talking about, I realized that I may NOT be that kind of weird. I wait and listen for the right words, and opportunity to come along. Back when I was in between marriages I asked God that others would see my faith, rather than me merely speaking it. That the fruit of my life would be the result of me abiding in him, and he in me (John 15). That I would like to be accused one day of being a Christian, with my accusers having evidence to that effect. The very fact that I was between marriages, my life in a mess, was why I was praying that kind of prayer, on the corner of St. George's and Third in North Vancouver, on my way to work one day.

But as Sunday has since faded into three days of ignoring that part of Bish's message... arguing? I realize the Holy Spirit is speaking to me about this. If I am a gift to my church... and I am humbly realizing that I need to be temperate. Self controlled. Gentleness (an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit) which means "controlled release".

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23 NIV

I know I can't help being unique. And certain aspects of my being different I doubt God will ever wash out of me, nor do I think he wishes to do so.

Like when I was confronted by my fellow drivers – I drive for a living – about my driving, instead of fighting them, I submit to them. I thank them for speaking to me, man-to-man, and helping me to become a better driver. Some, if not all are shocked that I don't argue with them. I shall have to come up with a vocabulary of words that all mean different, unique, and strange. Leaving weird to be the heading over things that do not bring about good fruit.

Back in 2004 I made this my own personal mission statement,

To be a safe place to be.