

## **“Excitement is Hard to Hide – And Why Would We?”**

A Sermon Shared with the Congregation of St. Andrew’s United Church  
for Sunday, February 7, 2016

Scripture Readings: Exodus 34:29-35

2 Corinthians 3:12-18

(by The Rev. Dr. Bill Steadman)

There are various ways to measure what is the best way to act and live. Some of us have got the message – do what we are told, and then nothing bad will happen. Simply obey orders, and no one can criticize us for making the wrong choice.

That may sound like a wise choice, but life is filled with examples where people were simply obeying orders and they committed despicable atrocities against others, or stood by when things happened that were unhelpful.

Then there are those who decide they must do what is right no matter the cost. They will tell people when they are upset at what is going wrong. They may not be the most popular people, for they are ready to set things right that they do not find appropriate. Some put others at a standard that they could never live up to themselves, while some would only expect of others a standard that they would expect of themselves – they are seen as hard on others because they are first of all hard on themselves.

Then there are those who spend their lives simply being quiet participants, doing what is expected and no more; following through on what is asked and no more, and maybe something happens for them to change their perspective and they will eventually get involved in much more direct, hands-on, leadership ways.

The Bible has many stories of religious leaders over the centuries, and most of them have been individuals who called people to accountability or had a momentous experience that changed them for the future. They expect much – but most of all they expect much from themselves, for they are confident that God supports them and gives them the direction they need to know how to act into the future.

That is one way to look at who offer leadership in the Bible – but how leaders develop followers also is varied. The apostle Paul is not adverse to offering direct comments and teachings – encouraging followers to “do as I do,” but in the letters to the church in Corinth he seems to be more responding to questions that come from the community there, not pushing his own agenda and teachings.

In his book *The Origin of First Corinthians*, John Hurd posits the theory that First and Second Corinthians are not two letters, but a compilation of several letters, or at least letters that address several separate and independent issues raised by the church members in Corinth.

And the answers that Paul offers echo thought of the futurist Alvin Toffler when he wrote: “You’ve got to think of the big things when you do the small things, so the small things go in the right direction.”

For Paul, the focus was always on: choose what’s really important to you. Many of us get caught worrying about an unknown future, but if we focus on what is of value in all that we do, we will not go wrong.

Make sure that we do not spend our time debating what to do, but act in direct, meaningful ways – find a way to focus on what can and should be done in your neighbourhood, and not get lost in some far off situation that you can do nothing about. The church in Corinth was filled with people who wanted to debate everything. They seemed to question whatever was suggested. To the people of this church, Paul’s advice was simple: “Live your faith.”

Finally, follow what you know is true in your heart. As Maria Robinson once said, “No one can go back and start a new beginning, but everyone can start today and make a new ending.”

The story of transfiguration is not about the perfect start, but about being ready to make a difference moving forward. Wherever we go, we must be prepared to focus what we do to impact what lies ahead.

And if we have a commitment for such goodness, we should not shy away from enthusiasm and commitment – after all, we should be enthusiastic as to what is important to us. God expects nothing less.