

JESUS CALLING  
Stewardship Sunday, November 19, 2017  
Carol Thomson

Every Wednesday at Agape, before serving our guests, the kids and adults gather to go over the rules and to share a devotional. It was here that I was first introduced to the book, Jesus Calling by Sarah Young. This little book is a daily devotional in the narrative of Jesus himself. As I started reading, I felt very put off and uncomfortable with the way it is written. The directives are repetitive, challenging and difficult to accept. It wasn't until I began to read and study the daily Bible references that I realized that the words were those of Jesus and His teachings.

As Christians, Jesus challenges us daily to come out of our comfort zones spiritually and physically. It is not always easy or comfortable. Imagine that Jesus came to your workplace or home and asked you to give up everything; possessions, family, EVERYTHING and follow Him. How would you respond? Think of His disciples who did just that! Ultimate Jesus Calling! Jesus' speaking to us is probably much more subtle.

Pete and I are beginning to realize our true age, not who we think we are in our heads! We are the brunt of much teasing from our girls about our inability to hear like we used to. With both of us experiencing hearing loss, our conversations are sometimes laughable and often confusing. Even if we think we are paying

attention and are hearing accurately, we may not be. As a pre-school director, my school was located in a small Presbyterian Church. One day a member of their Session came to me with a proposal about sharing their internet service. He said (or so I thought!) that if we wanted to be able to use their service, in exchange we could paint the church. I thought this was quite an unreasonable and unfair request until my secretary and good friend told me that he was requesting that we pay the church. Much more reasonable!! My friend and I still have a good laugh over my misinterpretation.

Needless to say, Pete and I find that we really need to pay extra attention to what someone is saying and at times, even that extra effort does not yield clarity and detail. But the effort can often make a difference. This approach to better hearing is similar to listening to Jesus speaking and calling to us. Sometimes His call seems muffled or not even evident. Sometimes we are so busy and self-involved that we do not hear Him at all. But the more we are intentional, make time to be quiet in the presence of Jesus and spend time with Him through prayer and reflection, the better we can hear His call. As we build a relationship with Jesus and develop our ability to be present in all aspects of our lives, we are better able to receive the gifts of the Spirit: Love, Grace, Joy and Peace.

Once we are able to receive these amazing gifts, we are then able to give them to others by being more loving, more graceful and more peaceful. The point

of my analogy is this, that there are times when we need to be even more intentional and attentive in order to hear Jesus calling. Shortly after my mom died in 2009, David asked me to consider taking on the responsibility of Stewardship & Finance chair. My closest connection to anything to do with numbers is my husband Pete, who is one of the most amazing and dedicated math teachers (along with Ginny Kurek and Joan Caroselli). Despite my hesitation, I took a leap of faith following prayerful consideration and here we are 8 years later. Jesus Calling... I have been feeling a nagging that it was time to reconsider what I am being called to do at FPC. Some of my "Spirit moments" (ahha moments) have recently happened while washing the dishes. One day, June 13<sup>th</sup> to be exact, the words Jesus Calling came to mind. I stopped what I was doing and opened my book to the entry on June 13<sup>th</sup>. It read "I am creating something new in you: a bubbling spirit of Joy that spills over into others' lives. Do not mistake this Joy for your own in any way. Instead, watch in delight as My Spirit flows through you to bless others. Let yourself become a reservoir of the Spirit's fruit. Your part is to live close to Me, open to all that I am doing in you. Don't try to control the streaming of My Spirit through you. Just keep focusing on Me as we walk through this day together. Enjoy My presence, which permeates you with Love, Joy, and Peace." The Bible reference related to this entry is from John 3:8 "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it

goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” I must admit that I was brought to tears. Jesus Calling... I am now participating in the Senior High Bible study every other Sunday evening. What a blessing our young men and women are, So smart, so inquisitive! Jesus is calling them to ask questions and explore their faith. The last time we met, one young man asked how you know when God is speaking to you. What a great conversation we had! Jesus Calling...

One evening at Agape, all of the guests at my table seemed to know each other. I went to get iced tea and when I returned to the table, Liz and I realized that my guests had taken each others' hands and one of the men was saying a prayer. Their hearts were filled with gratitude to the Lord. We were so touched. Jesus Calling...

Cassie is a 17 year old student from Westfield Pres. who has been very active in the Agape program. As a senior in high school, she left for Scotland this fall to pursue a college degree in theology. How amazing that someone so young feels Jesus Calling so strongly.

I recently had a conversation with the deli man at Stop & Shop. While discussing the weather, he commented on how blessed we were, thinking of the recent hurricane victims. We talked about our many blessings and the goodness of God. Opportunities for witness... Jesus Calling!

5

Ken Macari reminded us in his sermon last Sunday that the Holy Spirit is always speaking and that we need to remove the wax from our ears and our hearts and to listen and obey when the Holy Spirit speaks to us in our everyday lives. If you are asked to consider sharing your gifts to reach out to others, to give of your resources or to lead, consider in stillness and prayer what Jesus is calling you to do. Respond to His call with Joy and with an open heart, trusting that He will make your path clear and lead the way.