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West Valley Presbyterian Church
Palm Sunday
A Life of Surrender
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One of the hardest things I have ever had to do was to teach my 2 teenagers to drive.

I haven't taught Jonathan yet...but its about that time.

It isn't that they were bad at it, although I still remember some pretty close calls.

One time we barely made a turn past a truck that was parked on the side of the road. We turned right and there was literally a hair between myself and the truck's bumper.

Once one of them - I think it was Chris - is waiting at an intersection to make a left turn into traffic...the cars are coming both ways and then there is a little break. (IMAGE - red prius?)

"Now," I say. "Turn left now". "Now?" he asks...looking back and forth. "Yes now." I say. "Are you sure?"he says...Yes...I say...go now...Long pause, deep sigh, and then he starts to move..."Wait!...I shout....."Don't go..." because by now a car is coming...Chris *slams* on the break even though we were barely moving to begin with...my seat belt locks and grabs me as I lurch forward....

The people behind us blare the horn...they go around us...we stay there trying to get into oncoming traffic for a long time...the dialogue continues ..."Go"..."Now?"..."Yes"..."Now?"..."Yes"..."Wait!...don't go. So scary!!

Now I understand there is now a car you can get that literally parallel parks itself...have you heard of that?(IMAGE) I am going to get that car ...and maybe in a while we won't have to teach our kids how to drive at all.

When they take their driver's test at the DMV they won't even have to be behind the wheel...they can be eating popcorn in the back seat watching You Tube their phone...and none of us adult drivers will ever have to risk our lives again.

But the real problem with me teaching my kids to drive ...because they did a great job learning, and neither of them.....have ever had a serious accident- but the reason it was so hard for me to do this...is the profound truth that *when I am teaching them...I am not in the drivers seat.*

I am not showing them how to drive anymore by doing it myself...I am *letting them drive* ...giving them the wheel....and my life is in their hands...

I have to relinquish control.

I am literally at their mercy.

I can say "Go now"...but they may not go. I can yell "Watch out!" but they may or may not slow down. I have to let them drive and for someone like me, that's very difficult.

I am used to being in charge...

Doing it! Making it happen...*the way I want to see it happen*

When someone else is in charge...making it happen...or not making it happen as the case may be...I have to pull back and think "*you know what woman?...you've just got to surrender. It's out of your hands.*"

Now...moving the idea of surrender to a Biblical perspective

The Life of Surrender is something we're all called to do...

We are all called to put our lives in God's hands...and its very difficult for many of us

Our life of surrender is not a passive "whatever"...it is an active way to live that is filled with trust in God...that we have to act upon everyday

When Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem it was not easy for him either As he mounted that donkey and headed into the city where people were shouting Hosannah! Hosannah! He was riding to his own death.

Ironically "Hosannah" means "SAVE NOW!" and Jesus knew it was a cross...and only a cross that would save the world for thousands of years to come.

The people did not know that. They thought Jesus had come in to overthrow the Roman government. Jesus had a whole other plan in mind.

Did he want to go to the cross? No.

Was it easy for him to go to the cross? No. It was excruciating.

He pleads with God in the garden right before the soldiers arrest him -
Take this cup from me.

He sweats great drops of blood...(which can actually happen with
heightened stress) kneeling there begging to be released from the
cross...If it is possible...if there is any other way...Please Father please...
take this away – that’s his human side...I don’t want to walk this road; I
don’t want to go to the cross...

Jesus struggles. He’s in torment. But then he prays the ultimate prayer
of surrender..

Nevertheless...not my will...but yours be done...and when he prays this
prayer angels came and strengthened him

1. **The Life Of Surrender Is An Intentional Choice Every Day**

The first step of surrender is asking Jesus to come into your heart and
take over your life. You can do that today if you want. You simply pray
Jesus come into my heart...forgive my sins...be my Lord and Savior.
Something is missing in my life. I want you Lord to be behind the wheel
not me anymore...Its called “giving our life to Jesus”...

It’s the first step of surrender. But after that...because most of us like to
be in driver’s seat...all the time...we give our lives to Jesus and then we
take it back again...

So living a surrendered life is an intentional choice everyday

Where everyday we give him the steering wheel...again and again...
everytime we take the wheel back...as I am prone to do...we hand it over
again

**In the surrendered life....I *choose* to do the loving thing even when I
don’t feel like it**

**In the surrendered life...I *choose* to do justice...love mercy...walk
humbly even when it is inconvenient**

**In the surrendered life...I *choose* to sacrifice for others...even when
it is hard**

I went to see Earl Johns last week.

Earl is one of the saints in this church – a faithful wonderful man in his
90’s – deeply loved by many of us, and as some of you know he is dying

of cancer. He doesn't have much more time left...he is very weak and on oxygen.

I went to see him, and I was going to ask him if he had a special scripture or anecdote he wanted me to share at his memorial service and of course I had underestimated Earl's goodwill and desire that everything be taken care of before he died so that no one would have to wonder or worry about what to do.

It shouldn't have been a surprise to me that when I got there...

He had his whole entire service written out for me, and he took me through it step by step.

But as he began to tell me about what he wanted, he started this way

He said, "Kim...at the beginning of my service I want everyone to stand up and sing the Doxology. ..the Doxology is a hymn that starts out "Praise God from whom all blessings flow...Praise Him all creatures here below....praise him above ye heavenly host...Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost..."

I want to sing this song because I want everyone to know that Jesus is worthy to be praised." He said, "Do you realize what a sacrifice he made for us? Do you realize what a tremendous gift he gave us? It was intentional Kim. He made the choice...he intentionally surrendered his life for us, so that we could be forgiven. Do you realize this?"

"Yes,Earl..I get it. I'm a pastor. I'm supposed to be telling you this...you are telling me this....

"Oh the grace and love and mercy of God," he continued..."that he would do this for us. Kim, he says, It is such a gift....his sacrifice was so intentional...the cross is an amazing gift of God's love. Jesus is worthy to be praised because he intentionally went to the cross..he made that choice. I want people to know that."

Surrendering to Jesus is an active choice everyday...just like Earl said... not a passive fatalistic "whatever" shrug...no...cause if it were just a "whatever" shrug...we'd always be at the wheel cause that's our natural bent...

So then...the next point is...

2. Surrender To Jesus Christ Is Something We Do

As much as I have to sit next to my kids when they are driving and intentionally make the choice to hold my tongue, sit on my hands so I don't grab the wheel, and instead let *them* take me forward...let them be in the drivers seat

So surrender to Jesus Christ - who actually is a far better driver of our lives than any of us are - ...we can actually trust *him*...- we don't always know what those who are learning to drive might do...right?

But surrendering to Christ is still not easy...cause we like to be in charge ...so it is a choice we make everyday...we actively and intentionally put our lives into his hands...

We give him the wheel – and every time we take the wheel back – we give it to him again

And then we go and show by our actions that Jesus is driving this vehicle called our lives...not us

When we don't feel like loving...we surrender and choose to love anyway
When we don't feel like forgiving...we surrender and choose to forgive anyway

When we don't feel like praying...we surrender and pray anyway

When we don't want to sacrifice for someone...we surrender and we risk and we do what we say we believe...anyway...

You know I've been watching the coverage of this new Pope Francis... friends I just may become a Catholic Priest, and I am telling you now in case it happens, so you'll be ready...even though I am a woman. I may just be the first Catholic woman priest ever, cause Pope Francis might be the first Pope ever to say "its OK"

I really like this guy. Why? Because his actions line up with his words. He's doing things differently...he's connecting with real people in real ways

Do you know what he is doing on Maundy Thursday?

This coming Holy Thursday...to celebrate the last supper Jesus had with his disciples before he went to the cross?

Do you know what he is doing?

Pope Francis...is going to a prison for minors – a juvenile detention center in Rome...and he is going into that prison and he is going to wash the feet of the kids and teens in there, because at his last supper Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, symbolizing his willingness to serve them.

Normally, this foot washing is carried out in St. Peter's Basilica (image)... where the Pope washes other priests feet...but now its at the Casal del Marmo – prison for kids...(image) where the Pope will kneel down and wash the feet of the least of these. Kids who become criminals before they start to live...locked behind iron bars.

I think that's a good change...don't you?

We can't just talk about our faith. We've got to show it.

No one listens to words anymore. There are so many words...blah... blah...blah...

We often talk about information overload...yackity yackity yack..

The world is watching.

So many people have been hurt by the church. Maybe you are one of them.

So many people today distrust institutional religion.

And yet there is still this deep yearning for God in all of us, because God created us that way...to be in relationship with him

And people who don't know God, don't normally come to church – people in your workplace, at your school, on your PTA Board, in your golf group...

They are wondering...does anything these Christians say they believe translate into something that actually matters?

That reaches out to where I am?

That will help me?

The world is watching. Is church relevant? Is there really a God who cares for me? Can I learn about this God by watching the Christians?

Ghandi said, "I love your Christ, but I don't like your Christians."

Ghandi loved our Christ because of what he did...

Jesus set his face intentionally toward Jerusalem. He rode into the mob of people...and made the intentional excruciating choice to face and go

through the cross. **He told us God loved us and then he went and he showed us how much. The surrendered life is something you do**

I often ask myself...

If someone were to watch me live my life, to see what I'm involved in and where I spend most of my time, would they have a clear picture of what Jesus means to me?

Would they see me as someone sold out for Jesus...surrendered to him?

If our lives were our only testimony, would others know that we are surrendered? Would they know that we have surrendered our own desires and handed over the steering wheel to the One who says, "love your enemies, pray for those who spitefully use you, forgive 70X 7"...would people know about that One, by looking at my life?

It's a hard question, but an important one...

3.The Surrendered Life Takes Risks In Love

When my daughter turned 16 we all went skydiving with her. After signing multiple documents that I didn't really read all about absolving the skydiving people from liability of any kind...we suited up and Tim and I jumped out of an airplane with her, because it was her birthday and we loved her.

Luckily our parachutes opened. God is good.

Later we found out that the place we went to, whose name I will not mention, had had a number of fatalities and was not to be trusted. However we didn't know that, and it was the only place that took 16 year olds. So we went.

Now I don't think of church necessarily as a place of incredible risk, like that. We don't come here, putting our lives on the line, suited up ready to jump out of an airplane. Its kind of safe and cozy in here, we feel content, happy, warm, welcomed hopefully, and ministered unto.

But actually, the church was never meant to just be a place where we stay in our comfort zone and enjoy the status quo.

It was meant to be a risk taking community where risks in love were constantly made in the name of Jesus. Where we go out on a limb to love people the way Jesus did.

You see the early Christian church did things no other community ever did, or even thought of doing. They were constantly taking risks in the name of loving others. Constantly pushing the envelope to reach out to people no one else cared about.

The early church took in widows and orphans and cared for them. Nobody did that back then. Nobody. These were people who were considered at the time to be the lowest of the low. They had no inheritance, no power, no family connection. So why would you take care of someone like that?

The early Christians would say, because Jesus did it.

The early Christians used to go to people's homes who were dying of very contagious diseases. They would go into these places and lay their hands on the sick, and pray for healing... risking their own health and life.

Often there were terrible plagues, and people would be lying in the streets and the Christians would go out and carry them inside, and watch over them, and minister to them. No one else cared...cause quite frankly...

It wasn't safe. It wasn't easy. It was a risk, but the people in the early church were living a surrendered life, so they went where Jesus drove them...not necessarily where they wanted to go...

Because Jesus was behind the wheel, the early Christian church was going a different direction than the norm. Fully surrendered, and making the choice to risk in love...for those around them..and not hold back

Some of you know AMIN – he was here a few Sundays ago and said goodbye to us. He is now married and left us and moved to Canada where his new wife resides. But Amin came to WVPC from Camaroon, and landed in my office a couple years ago, with no money – not knowing a soul in the US.

To make a long story short, he had fled his family tribe back in Camaroon because of immoral acts they wanted him to commit - and he wouldn't do what they wanted, because he had become a Christian – and he actually came here fearing for his life. Now think about it...This guy just shows up and tells me this...I don't know really know who he is.... He could be lying, or cheating, or completely deranged, a mass murderer for all I know... So what do I do? Instead of risking anything myself... I give him to one of you...a wonderful ministry opportunity I say! Someone help this guy out please...cause I don't want to do this... I don't know who this guy is... (actually we did help him at the start)

And that's when Rich and Donna Hulsker here at WVPC stepped forward... At first they hired him to do some yard work...and then they hired him for countless more yard jobs, they ate with him, they drove him places, they helped him meet others from Camaroon, and they waited for him for long periods of time as he stood in lines trying to get Visas, green cards etc. They took him on...

Did they know if this guy was legit? Not really.

Did they have any kind of assurance that it all would work out? No.

A few days before he left us, to go to Canada where he is enrolled now in nursing school, Amin came to me and said, "Rich...Rich Hulsker...he's my father. Rich and Donna they're my family. I couldn't have done it without them."

You know...I just wonder...what might the world be like if we handed Jesus the wheel, surrendered all, and were committed to going wherever he took us, bent on taking risks to love others like that?

It wouldn't always be convenient – I'll guarantee you that

And it wouldn't always be safe – Christianity is anything but safe

And it wouldn't necessarily feed our ego and make us great

But it might change a life. Make a difference. Ease someones pain. And it might even bring someone to Jesus.

You see the world is watching us...the Christians...And in many ways the world is still crying out Hossanah. Save us now! There's so much pain, and heartache. So much need, and at the same time so much indifference...I promise you...Jesus will empower you to make a difference for someone if you

Dare to live the surrendered life...

I want to go into prayer right now with you and if any of you have not taken that first step of surrender, to ask Jesus into your heart you can do t

You can pray Jesus come into my heart...there is something missing there and I know its you. Forgive my sins...come and be my Lord and Savior. I want to know you, and live for you...I surrender my life to you...

And for the rest of us...it is an ongoing journey of constant surrender

Right now whatever you need to surrender, its the time to lay it down and give Jesus the steering wheel again...in any area of your life where you need to do that...

Lord we surrender to you our worry and our stress about not having enough, or of somehow not making it in this life, the way we feel we should (relieve us of the stress of all this, we give you back the wheel there)...we surrender our concerns about someone we love or someone we are having a difficult relationship with...we give this to you because those thoughts can just consume us...

We surrender to you our fear of the future that holds us back from taking risks, the subtle resentments we have toward someone, that bottle us up inside; Lord we even surrender to you right now any disappointment about you that we've from our past...whether the church has done it to us, or a

person...but whatever those hurts are it has made us less ready to give you the wheel....help us to see you as you truly are...

We surrender our need to be in charge...take over...do it our own way...be masters of our own lives...Lord give us the grace to believe that when you are in charge your driving is perfect, and your timing impeccable. Lord show us that we need you to be at the wheel...and that as we give the wheel to you we can trust in your guidance and in your gracious love -

IJN AMen