**June 10, 2018**

**Third Sunday after Pentecost**

**First Presbyterian Church**

**21 Church Street**

**Pittsford, NY 14534**

[**www.pittsfordpres.org**](http://www.pittsfordpres.org)

**(585) 586-5688**

**The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey D. Weenink**

**GOING OUT OF YOUR MIND**

Psalm 138

1I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise;

2I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.

3On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul.

4All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord, for they have heard the words of your mouth.

5They shall sing of the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord.

6For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly; but the haughty he perceives from far away.

7Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me.

8The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

2 Corinthians 4:13 - 5:1

13But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—“I believed, and so I spoke” —we also believe, and so we speak, 14because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence.15Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. 16So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. 17For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, 18because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

5For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Introduction to the Gospel lesson:

Jesus is so totally what the religious authorities don't expect that they have absolutely no idea what to make of him. He doesn't fit their categories, and what doesn't fit our categories we typically label abnormal, or deviant, or crazy, or possessed. We assume that what we know, have experienced, and hold to be true is normal, natural, and God-ordained, and that becomes the standard by which we measure -- and judge -- the thoughts and actions of others. Jesus had violated the Sabbath, healed, the unclean, related with those on the margins, and questioned the law. Jesus points back to the wildly merciful and unpredictably (and uncontrollably) gracious God who is always doing a new thing.

**GOING OUT OF YOUR MIND**

Mark 3:20-27 (NRSV)

20 and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. 21 When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." 23 And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. 27 But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

May your Word come upon us, O God, in our need for meaning, for understanding, strength and comfort. By your Spirit, move us not only to listen but to do what it says; through Jesus Christ. Amen

INTRODUCTION

A friend of mine told me about a certain episode in his life. As he puts it:

Several days ago as I left a meeting at a hotel; I desperately gave myself a pat down. I was looking for my keys. They were not in my pockets. A quick search in the meeting room revealed nothing. Suddenly I realized I must have left them in the car. Frantically, I headed for the parking lot. My wife has scolded me many times for leaving the keys in the ignition. My theory is the ignition is the best place not to lose them. Her theory is that the car will be stolen. As I burst through the door, I came to a terrifying conclusion. Her theory was right. The parking lot was empty. I immediately called the police. I gave them my location, confessed that I had left my keys in the car, and that it had been stolen. Then I made the most difficult call of all, "Honey," I stammered; I always call her "honey" in times like these. "I left my keys in the car, and it has been stolen." There was a period of silence. I thought the call had been dropped, but then I heard her voice. "Idiot", she barked, "I dropped you off!" … Now it was my time to be silent. Embarrassed, I said, "Well, come and get me." She retorted, "I will, as soon as I convince this policeman I have not stolen your car!"

Can you relate? My soon-to-be 98-year-old mother, who is very much with it and in sound mind, likes to tell me, I think a lot about the here after. I walk into a different room and wonder: “now what was I here after? I think all of us have those moments when we stop in the middle of doing something and wonder, “What is it that I was about to do?” “What have I come here to do?” Sometimes this happens because we’ve been distracted; sometimes it’s because we’re not thinking what we’re doing; sometimes we are having brain overload –sometimes it’s emotional stress. Sometimes its something more serious than absent mindedness. As someone once quipped: “I like my bifocals, my dentures fit me fine, My hearing aid is perfect, but I really miss my mind.” We’ve all been in situations when we felt like we were going out of our minds.

In the curious story that we heard from Mark’s Gospel, they have accused Jesus of being crazy; that he lost his mind. Even his family is worried. In fact, they’ve come to restrain him, to forcibly take him home. There are also some visiting scholars from Jerusalem present, and they are less kind. They say he is possessed of Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons. (Beelzebul was the name of a Caananite pagan god. Whom the Hebrews mocked by calling Beelzebub which is translated “Lord of the Flies,” or king of the dung heap. Through the years, the term Beelzebub became synonymous with Satan – the Devil.

JESUS MIND LOSS

All this happens as Jesus is just beginning his ministry. He’s been off preaching in nearby towns; the crowds have been huge, even though his message has been controversial. Now he’s back home and everybody thinks he’s gone over the edge.

The word in Greek -- leros (which forms the root of our word "delirious") is best translated as "out of one’s minds." You know, crazy, insane, possessed.

Jesus responds to say that the zeal that has gotten him accused of craziness, is more accurately a focused passion - a passion with depth, purpose and application. His passion is single minded devotion to that which is beyond himself, that which is from above.

They accused Jesus of a lot of things. They said he was a religious heretic. They said he was a drinker and a glutton. The said he was a habitual Sabbath breaker. They said he was too political; they said he wasn’t political enough. They said he hung out with the wrong sort of people. But never, never once did they say that he was dispassionate. Never once did they say he was too careful. Never once did they say he was overly cautious.

ABANDON SELF-ABSORBTION

The core truth about life, perhaps the central truth of all religious faith, is that being fully faithful is all about moving beyond that myopic, festering concern about me and mine and what I want and what pleases me, moving beyond self-absorption, toward a passionate engagement with that which is not me, a zeal for that which transcends me, a seething for that which is bigger and broader than me.

William James said, “The great use of life is to spend it on something that outlasts it.”

One of the great Confessions known as the Westminster catechism asks: what is the chief end of humanity. The answer : “…to enjoy God and love God forever.” That is a single minded devotion to that which is beyond self; dedicated to that which is above. Our temptation is to live out our days in a merry-go-round of rivalry, finger-pointing, or an endless fretting about getting our fair share. Our temptation is to live life guardedly. Our temptation is to live life flat and narrow. Our eternal temptation is to live life small and without passion.

I believe that there is an intersection each of us is meant to find in our lives. In fact, there may be several over a lifetime. That intersection is the place where your bliss intersects with the needs of the world; where that which brings you great joy intersects with that which the world needs from you.

LOSING YOUR MIND

They said Jesus had lost it. That he had gone crazy, so unbounded was his passion for that which was beyond him. They said He had lost His mind. The gospel always upends things, inviting us to see that God has more in store for us than we’d imagined, more even than we’d dare hope. That’s the promise of the gospel. The great question, maybe the only one that finally matters is this: In your life, will any one ever accuse you of losing Your mind for something more important than yourself ? Going out of your mind can be a good thing. It’s ok to lose your mind – as long as you keep your soul. Or, in the words of Proverbs:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek God’s will in all you do, and God will direct your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Closing Prayer