

## **“ChristCycle”**

**Pastor Dave Carlson  
First Presbyterian Church  
Sunday, May 12, 2013**

**Old Testament Lesson – Psalm 97:1, 6-12  
New Testament Lesson – Ephesians 1:15-23**

Some of you know that Yuri and I like to go bicycling. It’s something we can do together; it’s our thing. Whether you like bicycling, hunting, taking drives together or walks, doing service work, taking in a Royals game or whatever you and your family and loved ones do together out in the world, it all has one thing in common – our time and energy need to be in sync with one another.

You and your loved ones need to be heading in the same direction, at relatively the same pace and toward the same goal or endpoint. If any of this is out of sync, we find ourselves off course and nobody gets what they’re after.

For Yuri and me out on the Little Blue Trace bike trail, it means we don’t make it that day to the Cold Stone Creamery. For us to get ice cream, both Yuri and I have to peddle our bikes at about the same speed, make all the same turns, and have enough energy to bike nearly 7 miles – one way.

Our mantra as we peddle and peddle and peddle becomes “ice cream,” “ice cream,” “ice cream.” It’s amazing what a little focus will do to keep two people on track, moving forward together toward the same goal.

In our New Testament Lesson, the Apostle Paul gives us as Christians a little focus for moving forward together toward the same goal. The focus we are called to is “the hope to which God has called (us), ... the riches of (a) glorious inheritance among the saints, and ... the immeasurable greatness of (God’s) power for us who believe....”

So Ephesians, having given us our focus as followers of Christ, which again is Christian hope, a rich, spiritual inheritance to share with one another, and access to God’s power at work in us and through us, Ephesians then goes on to give us the means to maintain this focus and to reach these goals.

For us to stay on track as followers of Christ, we need to live our lives according to the principles that Paul lifts up in his letter to the Ephesians. There are three of them – three guiding principles for Christian living that Paul celebrates.

He says "I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love towards all the saints .... (And) I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ ... may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him." Paul gives thanks to God for the faith and love of the Ephesians and their increasing knowledge of who Jesus Christ is in their lives.

Faith, love, and knowledge of Christ – these are the guiding principles by which we reach the goals God sets for us as a community of faith, and as individuals.

But how do we keep these principals and goals in mind as we go through the day? One way is to create a mental picture of the goals that drive us forward, as well as the guiding principles that keep us on track.

Remember the bicycle. You've all got a picture of a bicycle in your bulletins; it's on the other side of your music sheet insert. The ushers are going to bring you a pen, if you need one, so we can create our mental picture right now, of the goals that drive us forward and the guiding principles that keep us on track.

Think of the goals that drive us forward as the back wheel of the bicycle, where the energy of the peddles moves the bike forward. The back wheel has three spokes – three goals – that drive us forward – *Christian hope, a spiritual inheritance, and divine power.*

Pick three of the six spokes on the back wheel of your drawing and label them **Christian hope, spiritual inheritance, and divine power.** You can write them right above and below the line that creates the spoke, kinda like what I have done here. These are the three goals that drive us forward. Label those now; you can use a hymnal for a backing as you label your picture. Everybody have those goals written in – those driving forces? Good.

Now, let's turn to the three guiding principles that keep us on track as we move toward those goals – *faith in the Lord, love for each other, and knowledge of Christ.* Let's put these three principles on our front wheel; label one of the front-tire spokes **Faith in the Lord**, label another one **Love for Each Other**, and label a third spoke **Knowledge of Christ** you can do that now. These three principles make up the front wheel of our bicycle. These guiding principles keep us on track and moving forward in the same direction.

They are the spokes of our front wheel that steer us in all that we do here as a church and out in the world as Christians. Without faith, love, and knowledge of Christ, we end up flailing around out in the world, with nothing to keep us together moving in the same direction.

It's like the two goofballs riding along on a tandem bike, you know, two riders, one bike. Suddenly, the one on the front seat hits the brakes, gets off, and starts letting air out of the tires. The one on the back says: "Hey! What are you doing that for!?!". The first guy says, "My seat was too high and I wanted to lower it a bit."

Well with that, the one in the back has had enough. He jumps off, loosens his own seat and spins it around to face the other direction. "What are you doing?" asks the first guy. "Look," says the rider on the back, "if you're going to do stupid stuff like that then I'm turning myself around so I can go home!!"

To keep us from doing stupid stuff in life – stuff that let's people down or sends us off in the wrong direction – we need to be moving forward under a divine power that is guided by the principles of faith in God, love for each other, and knowledge of Christ.

This is what brings us together as the church. Think of it as the front wheel of our ChristCycle – Christ-cycle. Why don't you label your drawing My ChristCycle across the top? ChristCycle is all one word, just like our sermon title today. My ChristCycle.

We all have an opportunity to get some exercise riding our ChristCycles here at First Presbyterian Church. Getting out and using your ChristCycle means coming to worship where we exercise and demonstrate faith in the Lord. It means joining together in fellowship and service; that's how we show our love for each other.

And it means attending to our Christian education through Sunday school and Bible study and other small groups where we expand our knowledge of Christ.

As long as we maintain these three front spokes of the church – faith through worship, love through service, and knowledge of Christ through Christian education – we'll be able to stay on track as a church and as individuals.

And not only that, we'll be able to bring others along with us for the ride, as we move together toward the goals that drive us forward – our Christian hope, our shared spiritual inheritance, and God's divine power, at work in us and through us.

OK, now that we have our ChristCycles made, who should we put in the driver's seat? Answer: God. It's not a tandem bike; there's only one seat, and that's for God. God needs to be in the drivers seat of our lives.

Why don't you do that now; take your pen one last time this morning, and put God in the driver's seat of your life. You can use the middle space of the bike to write "My Life."

And then later, after worship, if you would, drop your pen in the baskets on the way out, but take your ChristCycle with you; there are even some print-outs like this one available on the Credenza in the Parlour. Let your ChristCycle carry you forward in the coming week and beyond.

And ask yourself, is it really God in the driver's seat, powering and guiding you forward. And if not, how can we make more room for God in our lives?

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Gracious God, we thank you for the unconditional love we receive from you, demonstrated most vividly in Jesus' willingness to call us friends, and then lay down his life for us.

For many, we experience a human manifestation of Christlike love in our mothers, and we thank you for them. We thank you for the spirit of motherhood wherever it is made manifest.

We thank you for the sacrifices of time and personal freedoms. We are grateful for those who endure sleepless nights on our behalf, and for those who care for us in times of illness or sorrow.

We thank you for those who taught us the faith and shared with us the stories of Jesus. We thank you for their discipline, for the correction that helped to mold our character, teach us respect and manners, and instill in us godly values.

We ask you to bless all mothers, to pour out your spirit of grace upon them, and to grant them strength and peace.

And for those for whom Mother's Day renews feelings of sorrow and grief over what never was or might have been, we ask for comfort.

For those who experience the pain of neglect or abuse, we pray for healing and the grace to forgive.

We thank you that you are present to each of us, whether our mothers are near or far, present or gone, and that in you, O God, we can find the perfect love and acceptance that we so deeply desire. So we turn to you in thankfulness, devotion, and love, as we join together in the prayer you taught us to pray, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver  
us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.  
Amen.