

Daily Renewal

Pennside Presbyterian Church

David Duquette

Graduates of 2015, we your family of faith that is Pennside Presbyterian Church, owe you a debt of gratitude, because the occasion of your graduation invites all of us to reflect on the essential intersection of daily living and Christian faith for at that intersection we can find daily renewal.

Daily renewal creates a resilient spirit in us that allows us to bend and not break when the weight of the world is on our shoulders, and as much as we wish nothing but the best for you (and for ourselves), you are graduates; you have faced challenges and felt how heavy life can be. You've already visited the intersection where faith isn't a luxury or an accessory; it's essential; it's what sees you through.

Resilience is a core competency for living in this world; this world we know today, and this world as it is becoming tomorrow, because one thing that is for certain is that in 4 years when some of you are graduating from college or have your next degrees or start your next job, today will be the good old days and Caitlyn Jenner's courage will be a distant memory if we remember it at all.

Resilience is illustrated by one of my favorite stories: Sir Robert the Bruce was a great knight and Scotland's greatest hero; he was George Washington before George Washington, but there was a time when the tide of public favor was against him; he was running for his life and it seemed like the British would soon capture him. Exhausted, he took refuge in a barn and fell asleep. When he woke up, he noticed a spider in the rafters. The spider spun a strand of web and tried to connect it to the next beam; it swung across, but the web did not stick. It tried again and again and again and again until finally, the web stuck and the spider could weave its web. Sir Robert the Bruce saw this and said to himself, "If this spider can keep trying after so many efforts have failed, so can I." Adversity lay ahead, so did struggle, but history remembers the field known as Bannockburn where Sir Robert won the day and drove the British from Scotland.

The Apostle Paul invites us to develop a resilient spirit when he writes, *2 Corinthians 4:16–17 (NRSV)* ¹⁶ *So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.* ¹⁷ *For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure,*

Graduates of 2015, develop a resilient spirit. What you see is what you get, so practice daily renewal.

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1. WYSIWYG – *What You See Is What You Get*

Once upon a time in a universe long ago and far away, there was a magical tribe of humans known as computer programmers; and these computer programmers were devoted to their quest for WYSIWYG, software that worked so well that “What You See Is What You Get.”

Today, WYSIWYG isn’t a goal; it’s an expectation; it’s so basic that as I type WYSIWYG in this sermon, my computer’s spell check offers its benediction with nary a red line to be seen.

“What you see is what you get” is no modern revelation. Paul points to it when he writes, *2 Corinthians 4:18 (NRSV)* ¹⁸ *because 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.*

Our perspective on our circumstances has incredible power in determining how we will respond to our circumstances; will we be resilient and find a way to adapt, or will we be that stiff reed that Confucius teaches us is broken in the wind?

Consider this parable of the shoe salesman: Two shoe salesmen were sent to Africa to evaluate business prospects for their company.

Salesman 1 sent the following report: Situation hopeless. No one wears shoes.

Salesman 2 sent this: Tremendous business opportunity! No one is wearing shoes!

Paul invites us to view our circumstances from the perspective of the resurrection. God raised Jesus from the dead. God did that in this world, so there is no telling what God will do next in this world. There is no limit to what God can do in this world and in our lives.

That faith gives us perspective on our circumstances; life happens – what do we see? This isn’t the end of the world; this is *“slight, momentary affliction.”* This isn’t empty, meaningless, and purposeless; this is *“preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure.”*

Life happens; the circumstances are the same, but seeing them from the eternal perspective of resurrection makes everything and anything new – even us.

Possibilities abound; what you see is what you get.

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2. Daily Renewal

Prior to Thursday night's Exeter baccalaureate service, we clergy types gathered in the library, small talk ranged from one thing to another, and somehow found its way to golf.

One of my peers related how last year he went to the driving range 3 times per week to hit balls and his game improved. This year, he hasn't been going to the range, and his game has suffered.

Who knew? Practice really does make perfect!

WYSIWYG doesn't just happen; it is the choice of a lifetime; a choice we make each and every day.

Graduates, don't just be Christians. Don't settle for a simple faith that tells you that in the end it all works out and it really doesn't matter what you do. Don't just be Christians; practice Christian faith. Read the Bible; lots of folks quote the Bible; few read it. Join their ranks. There are apps for that; you can read it on your phone or your tablet or online or even go old school and read it book form!

Read the Bible and pray. These are basic Christian practices, but every foundation is basic. $2 + 2 = 4$. Subjects and verbs must agree. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men [and women] are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

These are basic, but put them in the hands of Martin Luther King, Jr., Maya Angelou, or Stephen Hawking, and these basics will change the world (again and again and again). "I have a dream." "I know why the caged bird sings." "Black holes emit radiation."

Read the Bible and pray, and your world will change (again and again and again).

Here are just a few more of the many positive findings about spirituality and its influence on physical and mental health:

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- I. Canadian college students who are involved with campus ministries **visited the doctor less**, scored higher on tests of **psychological well-being**, and **coped with stress** more effectively.
- II. Those with an intrinsic religious orientation, regardless of gender, exhibited **less physiological reactivity toward stress** than those with an extrinsic religious orientation. They were also **less afraid of death** and had **greater feelings of well-being**. (Those who were intrinsically oriented dedicated their lives to God or a 'higher power,' while the extrinsically oriented ones used religion for external ends like making friends or increasing community social standing.)
- III. Prayer works for young and old alike. Prayer and spirituality have been linked to:
 - a. Better health
 - b. Less hypertension
 - c. Less stress, even during difficult times
 - d. More positive feelings
 - e. Less depression
 - f. Greater psychological well-being
 - g. Superior ability to handle stress¹

Graduates of 2015, family, friends, and fellow members of Pennside Presbyterian Church who are listening in: What you see is what you get, so see everything in light of the resurrection of Jesus. Read the Bible and pray. Develop a resilient spirit by practicing daily renewal. And may the Lord bless and keep you, may the Lord be kind and gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Spoiler alert – that's in the Bible! Who knows what you'll discover and the difference you'll make with a resilient spirit born again and again and again through daily renewal. Amen.

¹ http://stress.about.com/od/optimismspirituality/a/22307_God_power.htm