

Streetsville United Church

Sunday, May 05, 2019

Rev. John Tapscott

“THE COMPLETION OF A GOOD WORK”

Philippians 1:6

A couple of times over the last month I have travelled to downtown Toronto to support a person going a challenging medical situation. I take the Go Train from Clarkson to Union Station where I meet the individual before we proceed to the appointment. Now I know some of you often make that trip, perhaps everyday if you work downtown. As we know, Union Station is under construction and while progress has been made over the last few years, it is still quite confusing. There are temporary corridors and boarded walls and detours. Can you imagine what it must be like for tourists who come through Union Station for the first time? But I find my way through and meet the person at the agreed upon spot, though we've had to use our cell phones to locate one another.

I read in the Toronto Star that renovations on Union Station began in 2009. It was supposed to be completed in 2015. Then the deadline was extended to 2018. Then spring 2019. Now it's been extended to the end of 2019. Recently one of the contractors filed for bankruptcy. So who knows when the renovations will be finished? And that's just the city's work. When that part is complete Metrolinx is supposed to start work on the tracks and that could take many years to complete. But some year the good work which has begun will be complete, hopefully.

The apostle Paul writes this about the Christian life in Philippians 1:6, “And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ.” God has begun a good work in us, in you and in me. It started way back on the day of our baptism, a day that you may not remember at all, if you were baptized as a child. But on that day God started a good work in you by the power of His Holy Spirit. And what is that work? God's work is to make you and me into strong, faithful, fruitful Christian disciples. God is working in you and in me, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to make us more like Jesus.

God's main goal for our life is not earthly success, though God certainly wants us to use our God-given gifts profitably for the service of humanity. God's main goal for our lives is that we become like Jesus, people who reflect Jesus' beatitudes in our own life. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, (those know who their spiritual need), for they will be filled. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

That's the kind of person Jesus was and that's the kind of people God is making us – beatitude people. You see, God is far more concerned about our character - who we are and who we are becoming, than about what we acquire or even what we accomplish. And God is at work in us, filling us with the fruits of righteousness, which are really the fruits of the Holy Spirit, love and joy and peace, patience and kindness and generosity, faithfulness and gentleness and self-control. He is shaping us as his own dear children who reflect his goodness and love and mercy. God is making us his witnesses in the world, so that when people see and interact with us, they can truly believe in God and his love. They will say, “there is a godly man, a godly woman.”

Now like the construction work at Union Station, God's work in us sometimes seems slow. Progress is hard to see. One reason for that may our slowness to cooperate with God's work. If we neglect God's gifts of worship, Scripture, sacrament and church fellowship, then God's work will be hindered and can even grind to a halt. The seeds sown at our baptism fail to take hold and grow. But if we faithfully use these God-given means of grace, then we give God good soil to work in. God's work in us makes progress and becomes easier, even for God.

Now certainly God works at his own pace in us. So don't be discouraged if God's work in you seems slow and sometimes there are three steps forward and two steps back. God is determined to finish the good work he has begun. And he keeps working through all the confusion of our lives, through all the ups and downs, and through all our experiences to bring it about. When we stray, he will seek by his Holy Spirit to draw us back to himself. God does not easily let us go. And if we cooperate with him even a little, he will surely finish what he has started. That's because it is God's work, not our own. “I am sure,” says Paul, “that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ.” One day, by God's goodness and grace, given in his crucified and Risen Son, you and I will stand before our Lord. We will be pure and blameless on that day, covered with Christ's righteousness accepted by our faith, and welcomed by God to eternal life in God's Kingdom. Perhaps in the heavenly mirror God will show us what he has made of us. And I'm guessing that we may be quite surprised and pleased by what we see, and certainly very grateful.