

Rev. Janet Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
World Wide Communion
October 3, 2021
Scripture: Luke 9: 18-26

Sermon: Who Is In Control?

Have you ever been the passenger in a car that you wished you were the driver? You wanted to be in control of the car you were in, but you weren't, and it was really difficult. I know I have been in that position. Wanting to be in control!

John Ortberg in his book ***The Me I Want to Be*** writes about that very thing. This is the new series our Ladies Bible group is studying on Tuesdays. John Ortberg writes (*page 61*), "It is a scary day when parents place their newborn child in a car seat for that child's first day out in the world. As they head down the road the fragility of life becomes very real. Do you know when the next scary day with your child and the car is?

Sixteen years later. Now you are handing over the keys. They are moving from the passenger's seat to the driver's seat. Up until then, you have been driving. You choose the destination, route, and speed. The person behind the wheel is the one in control." He goes on to say, (*page 64*) "When my children started driving, I would sit in the passenger seat to coach them. I tried to look relaxed, but if I thought they were taking too long to hit the brakes, my feet would start pressing into the floor on some imaginary brake on my side. My jaws would clench, and my shoulders would hunch, as if my body believed that it could help slow the car by tensing up."

I can totally relate to what he was describing as I sat, first with our daughter learning how to drive and last year our son. It really is a letting go of control in the car and trusting they will do the right thing. I can relate to that imaginary brake on my side and my children would just laugh because they knew what I was trying to do.

It is hard not to be in charge and in control. We all love to be in control of our lives and situations we are in. We like to do the driving; we

want to be the driver. Right? We want our life to go our way. We have plans for our life and our family. We want it to go our way because we are in control. Aren't we?

As disciples of Jesus and saying to him we will follow him, how do we let God be the driver? How do we surrender our lives to God and let go and trust God with our lives? How do we stop building our kingdom and work to build God's Kingdom?

When we become a disciple of Jesus, we confess our sins and our need for a Savior to change our life from within. The act of giving your life to God is letting go and trusting God with your life as you let God take control.

Jesus' sacrifice at the cross is the pathway to freedom as we daily surrender to God, seeking the eternal instead of the temporary of this broken world.

To let go and surrender your life to God is an ongoing, daily process of trusting God with our lives and choices and keeping our eyes focused on the eternal.

John Ortberg says, "I get out of the driver's seat. I hand over the keys to Jesus. I am fully engaged. In fact, I am more alive than ever before. But it is not my life anymore. It is his life. Have I invited Jesus along for the ride, or is he driving? Who is behind the wheel? Jesus is very clear on this point: There is no way for a human being to come to God that does not involve surrender." (page 62 ***The Me I Want to Be***).

"Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10: 39) And "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)

Letting go and trusting God is making a choice to submit your will to God. It is trusting God in all circumstances. Seeking God in prayer and spending time reading and studying his Word helps us build a relationship with God so that we know we can trust him when we are letting go. Letting go means also being doers of the Word and living a life obedient to the ways of God and not the ways of the world. Letting go means confessing before God, asking for forgiveness and serving others in

his name. Letting go means understanding that you are loved by God and that you are a child of the King.

2 Corinthians 5:15 says, "He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them."

In Galatians 2:20, the Apostle Paul tells us, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

These are powerful scriptures for us to remember as we willingly surrender our lives to God. Our lives are lived to serve God and not ourselves.

Letting go and trusting God, surrendering your life to him, takes the faith of a mustard seed.

When our hands finally open and our tight-fists of control are released, we find life and true peace unlike what the world has to offer us. Remember, is what we seek after only temporary or eternal?

When we humble ourselves before God and let God be the driver, we are met with His GRACE to carry us forward, feeling free to follow him. It is in surrendering to God that we are strengthened for the journey ahead. Remember, it is when we are weak that we become strong with the help of the Lord.

The scripture teaches us today that when you lose your life for Christ, you gain a new life in Christ. It is a much better life when you surrender willingly to life with Christ.

Offering ourselves to God isn't easy because it means we must first die to our own selfish will.

Jesus knows the pain of surrender. Jesus knelt in the garden and prayed, "Let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done."

Like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane we face our own cross and must cry out "Not my will, Father, but your will be done."

Being dedicated followers of Jesus Christ takes strength and wisdom and more importantly, it requires us to follow and not lead.

Surrendering to God means letting go of our plans and allowing God to guide our steps and direct our decisions. We need to be in step with God so that, not only did we seek Him in the planning, but also in the timing. We need to be patient and wait on God.

So, today in this very moment, we get to make the choice of whether or not we surrender to God and willingly follow him like the disciples did.

Today is the day that we can open our tight-fisted hands of what we hold so tightly to and let go of our control and open our hearts to let God take control of our life.

As you come to the Lord's Table today, many believers in Jesus around the world are also coming to his table. Many are facing persecution because they have placed their life into the hands of their Lord and Savior Jesus. Today, you tell Jesus, "Lord, today, I gladly place my life in your hands."

There is a song that I love by singer, Kathy Troccoli called "My Life is in Your Hands." Here are the words:

"Life can be so good; Life can be so hard. Never knowing what each day will bring to where you are. Sometimes I forget and sometimes I can't see that whatever comes my way you'll be with me. My life is in your hands, My heart is in your keeping. I'm never without hope, not when my future is with you. My life is in your hands and though I may not see clearly I will lift my voice and sing. 'Cause your love does amazing things. Lord, I know, my life is in your hands. Nothing is for sure. Nothing is for keeps. All I know is that your love will live eternally. So I will find my way and I will find my peace knowing that you'll meet my every need. When I'm at my weakest love you carry me. Then I become my strongest love in your hands. Lord, I know, my life is in your hands. I trust you Lord. My life is in your hands."

Open your hands and heart to let go and place your life in his hands.

"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it." (Luke 9: 24)