November 8, 2026 *Marion* Weekly Update

Sermon "One Single Thread" Titus 1:12-16

Today is All Saint's Day. We take time to remember and honor those in our community of faith who have passed from this life to the next in the previous year. It is a day of mixed experiences. For those near and dear to the ones who have passed the grief is still near. It is a day that can bring sorrow and mourning. At the same time it is another celebration and honoring of lives lived in the fullness of faith and in the community of faith. And yet a third layer is the inspiration that comes from remembering how we have been touched by the fruit of those lives. We should be motivated to live into the best example of Christ in our own lives as a result and honor to them.

As we move towards our scripture, I'd like share two thoughts about passing in this world that I've heard. The first is actually fairly recent.

"Everyone dies twice. We die when our physical bodies pass, and then a second time the last time our name is spoken."

That's a heavy thought. To some it might sound dark. However I'd like to get a little deeper. If we hear this, it reminds us to keep sharing the stories of those who have helped us become who we are and have taught us what it looks like to live faithfully. Almost like citing a work in some paper for school we remember to credit those who have made us who we are.

Then for our own lives we are motivated to live lives worth sharing once we have passed from this life to the next. How can we live faithfully and so Christlike that those lives we touch continue to remember what we've imparted to help them live better themselves.

The second you may have heard me share before. "Immortality in this world happens when what we've poured into the lives around us is passed on and passed along to the future generations." Each time this happens a part of us lives on, and so we become immortal in this world even after we've passed to the next.

While this applies to both positive and negative, this morning we stay positive. All of that love that we share. All of that grace. All of that example of Jesus we give lives on in some shape or form even when we've moved on.

I think this is one of the great tragedies of today. People are so concerned with their "personal faith". They are content with what they have and when family or friends come calling are persuaded to stop being part of the community of faith. What is forgotten is the example and that faith isn't just about you or me. It's about passing it on to the generations that are coming behind us.

That takes intention. And for most of us that community spark is what keeps us tethered closely to that intentional relationship with God and Christ. Our lives aren't just for ourselves. They are an example of our priorities to those around us and an invitation to imitate what we show and share.

In this light, we have a question. What is the thread that works through every area of our lives? We all have one. Being honest about it tells us how people predict us, and how our lives will echo in the future. How we will be remembered and what we will inspire.

All of us have a core sense that drives us. For some it's self. Others it might be success, however they define it. Fun. Family. Service. Any one thing that drives who we are and how we act.

Even if we are inconsistent in responses we are predictable. Driven by self, what is in Brent's self interest to say/do in this moment? Success, what will make Brent feel like he's succeeding in this moment? Fun, what will Brent find the most fun in this moment? Family, what will serve Brent's family best. And so on.

Figuring these things out make it easier for us to predict and understand one another. And it tells us, if we're honest with ourselves, what example we set, what we pour into the world, and what we tell others they should imitate.

The problem with any of these things is that all of them will pull us away from faithful living at some point. Because anytime the interest of our core and center conflicts with Christ's example, we will choose against Christ.

And I want to note that I am saying Christ. Not Bible. Why? We've established before that the Bible can be cherry picked to support almost anything. Christ defines what interpretation holds with integrity. It is the one that follows His example and His genuine teaching.

If we claim to be Christian, that has to be our center. And it has to weave through every part of life. This is what it means that God wants all of us, not part of us. We are allowed, even called, to be individuals. To have our own passions, preferences, gifts and talents. To fill a unique place in the church, the body of Christ. But what guides all of it is our commitment to follow Jesus.

No matter what is at our core that drives us, that core gives us essentials. Things we are compelled to do, and limitations on what we can/will do.

If we are in Christ, no matter where we are there are non-negotiables. Humility gentleness, kindness, patience, love, justice, selflessness, compassion, mercy, forgiveness and so on. There are boundaries of honesty, integrity, against cruelty, callousness, bitterness, judgement and condemnation, arrogance and pride, selfishness, and so on.

We'll never be perfect, but these are what we strive for when we follow Jesus Christ. When we fall and fail we own it. We apologize. We ask forgiveness. We strive to do better.

Mistakes aren't hypocrisy. Treating others like theirs are worse than ours, like we are the final word and judgment, like we don't mess up too. That's hypocrisy.

And I'm not talking about lip service. I'm talking about authentic and honest practice in everyday life.

This is what the letter to Titus is getting at when it says to the pure all things are pure. To the corrupt all things are corrupt. And it points out that there are those who claim to follow God, but in their actions deny that statement. In other words saying I'm pure doesn't mean I am. My life will bear that out. And that life will echo years after I am gone.

To the one with faith weaving all through their life, every moment is an opportunity for Christ to be shown. Every situation, good or bad, has a chance to shine the light of Jesus to the world and

those in it. God has a desire how we act in every circumstance. To the “pure” that means every second is another second to get things right.

On the other hand, to those who don’t hold this center, every moment is up for grabs. To the truly corrupt every situation is one to be exploited for their own means and gain. Those who have centers conflicting between God and the other, it’s anyone’s guess what wins out.

One day every one of us will have the chance to join what Hebrews calls the “great cloud of witnesses” This is the fullness of all that have walked faithfully and heard those words “well done good and faithful servant” upon moving from this life to the next.

The thread that weaves through all of our life will play a large part in that moment. It will reveal the truth of who we are and what lives on in us immortally in this world as it gets passed along.

It is my hope and prayer that all of us take moments like today to reflect and be thankful for those that have demonstrated what a faithful life looks like, and also take inventory of our own hearts and lives.

If we want to see authentic faith in God that reflects God it’s up to us to live it day in and day out. To be uncompromising. And to know that how we do it matters. Others are watching us, and learning.

As we take communion it is my hope that we remember and celebrate the hope that we live into every single day. And at the same time embrace the forgiveness and grace for those moments we do not with the gratitude that the next moment can be lived better.

As Adam Hamilton has said often, when we are truly, genuinely in Christ the last thing is never the worst thing because it rests in His grace. And our lives show whether or not we have accepted that grace in all it’s fullness.