

Sunday, August 9, 2015
Living the Life: Show Up
Psalm 130
Marysville United Methodist Church
Pastor Jenny Smith

People often say “I’m living the life” when they have one of those moments where everything comes together and life is exactly how they imagined it could be. “I’m living the life.” What is that image in your head? Is it based on a certain life event happening? Or is it more of a feeling when worlds align and you feel at peace?

We wish for the day when we finally figure things out and we’re living the life.

But guess what? You’ll always be figuring it out. Your life is right in front of you, now. And it’s time to live it well. Even if it’s not what you thought it would be. For the next four weeks, we’re going to explore a way to approach life that’s surprisingly freeing. Show up, pay attention, cooperate with God & release the outcome.

I had a season in my life where anxiety was a force to be reckoned with. There were several triggers and the feelings of dread and fear were real. I later learned our brains are a powerful thing when it comes to how we see reality. Our thoughts are not facts. When those moments came, I would cancel commitments and hole up at home. I felt overwhelmed and disconnected. I was not showing up to my life. It was passing me by. I’ve learned and grown a great deal since then, and I now can say I’m thankful for that season in my life, because it was the catalyst for some great things to come. But it was a painful time.

Are you showing up to your life right now? Or is it knocking you over so fast, you can hardly catch your breath between waves? Maybe it feels a lot easier to check out and just get through it.

I invite you to become someone who shows up. To bring your whole self to whatever situation you’re going through. No matter how hard it is. It’s not easy. It takes intentional effort. But as you’ll see in the next several weeks, your decision to show up to life can be incredibly profound.

What keeps us from showing up? Fear, doubt, inexperience/not sure what to do, laziness/no motivation, confused, past experiences, our calendar/too busy, fear of vulnerability - don’t want to get hurt.

Well, in a month, many families will get back into the school rhythm. Think about how you feel on your first day of school. [Show materials in backpack] You likely want your backpack ready and filled with your materials. You nervously clutch your new notebook and pen. The new clothes are laid out the night before. It’s a new start and you want to feel ready. Most people don’t like showing up feeling unprepared.

But I’ve got some great news of the gospel of Jesus Christ for you today: **God doesn’t need us to be ready, just willing.**

Sometimes, God asks us to take all the things we think we have to do to prepare and set them aside. Your backpack doesn’t need to have everything in it that you think it does. It’s okay to show up to God and to your life with an empty backpack.

Hugh Laurie, an actor, once said: It's a terrible thing, I think, in life to wait until you're ready. I have this feeling now that actually no one is ever ready to do anything. There is almost no such thing as ready. There is only now."

So if you don't feel ready for what's coming next in life, you're not alone. I think most people aren't really ready to show up. They just do it anyways.

"We can go through the Bible page by page and find person after person who didn't "feel" ready to do what God called them to do. **But God didn't ask them whether they felt ready. God decided they were ready.** Then God called them and told them what to do. Those we now call heroes of the faith are the ones who obeyed God's call even when they did not feel ready." - Deeply Rooted Instagram post

God invites us to show up to our lives - to each other - and we say that back to God.

Psalm 130 is a plea for God to show up

Invite reader to share Psalm 130 at this time

"I cry out to you, God...listen to my voice...let your ears pay close attention...my whole being hopes and waits..."

If you really boil down most of our prayers, isn't that what we want from God? We long for God to show up, to be present in the midst of what we're going through.

It's what we whisper beside the hospital bed of a loved one. Show up, God. As we watch our kindergartener walk into their classroom on the first day of school, our heart shouts, "Show up God. Bless this child." We watch our teenagers learn to drive, go on dates, graduate and we cry out, "Show up." We struggle in our relationships with others. "Show up."

The whole Bible is the story of God showing up to us - we sometimes show up, then forget, then leave, then try again - but God is always showing up - for the Israelites, for King David, for the prophets, for the disciples, for the first church communities. It's the incarnation. God shows up in the best way imaginable - as Jesus - to show us a beautiful way to live and love.

God doesn't need us to be ready, just willing.

Last Sunday I was greeting many of you after worship when someone named Jodie approached me. She asked about baptism for herself and maybe her young son. Jodie wrote later in an email, "I have prayed for a desire to know God's word so that I may learn what it is I really need to do to follow Christ. In my searching I have come to realize it is very much a journey, and that baptism is not something I have to wait to do until I am finished learning. So, I am ready to dedicate my life to learning scripture and being a follower of Christ as best I can and continue to grow." Jodie is already learning God doesn't need us to feel ready to be part of God's kingdom. And guess what? Next Sunday, she's going to share part of her story in worship and then get baptized!

So some of you have noticed that I'm what could you call, a young pastor. 33 years old as of last week. And I acknowledged in my first Sunday with you, that I'm fully aware some might be

anxious and unsure of what it will be like to have a younger pastor. And it's perfectly okay to feel that way.

I've known I wanted to be a pastor since I was 17. My church in Anchorage sent me to Exploration, a United Methodist gathering in Dallas, Texas, for those discerning a call into ministry. At the closing worship service, I knew without a doubt that God was calling me to be a pastor. After that, came college in Florida, getting married, working for a year or two in a church and then three years at seminary in Ohio. I'm not sure I ever felt fully ready for each of those steps but I kept moving forward.

I served for five years in Anchorage and got ordained in the midst of that. I loved being an associate pastor. Great senior pastors invested in me and I watched how they handled everything that ministry in the local church can throw at you. I remember my colleague leaving for two weeks of vacation and I got to work with the staff and I loved it! What an honor it was to help shape a staff culture. I realized God was preparing me to be a senior pastor one day. I was still nervous that I wouldn't know what to do when the time came, that I would be unprepared. But you know what was a God moment? Walking out of the introduction meeting with our SPRC several months back and my husband asking how I was feeling. I said, "I tell people you don't have to be ready, just willing. But sometimes you're actually ready too."

Friends, as we continue to get to know each other, I want you to know something. A lot of people gave me opportunities to learn and grow so that I can now be your pastor and I'm deeply thankful. They showed up to my life and encouraged me in ways they'll never know. And because of that, I'm now able to show up with my whole self to you as Marysville United Methodist Church. I love being your pastor!

So sometimes, you're willing **and** you're ready. Don't waste those moments listening to fear. Show up.

So may you show up to your life in a deep way. Knowing God is already showing up with you. And for you. And through you. And for the times you don't feel ready or prepared, show up anyways. Because in that moment of faith, with your empty backpack, when you think you can't actually do it, I imagine God rubbing hands together with a mischievous grin - "Yes, this is going to be good. Very good." Amen.