

**Sunday, July 31, 2022 -Pastor David's Farewell**

Memory Verse: "Stand firm, unshakable, excelling in the work of the Lord as always, because you know that your labor isn't going to be for nothing in the Lord." -1 Cor. 15:58

Text: Ephesians 2:10, "Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives."

Message: Swan Song #6: Be Steadfast

Scripture: 2 John 1:1-13

Blurb: This will be Pastor David's farewell message. He shares one more time the simple Gospel message: become a disciple of Jesus! Then he returns to his favorite Bible verse to urge Forest Hills to remain steadfast in following God and living for Him. At the end of the service we'll install Pastor Andrew as lead pastor and Pastor Cassi as associate. God is doing a new thing among us!

***[Recorded Worship Beginning]***

**WELCOME** -Pastor David

**MEMORY VERSE** -Pastor David

"Stand firm, unshakable, excelling in the work of the Lord as always, because you know that your labor isn't going to be for nothing in the Lord." -1 Cor. 15:58

**WORSHIP SONG** -Prerecording

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

***[Live Worship Beginning]***

**GATHERING SONG:** *All My Fountains* -Sanctify

**WELCOME** -Pastor David

**MEMORY VERSE** -Pastor David

"Stand firm, unshakable, excelling in the work of the Lord as always, because you know that your labor isn't going to be for nothing in the Lord." -1 Cor. 15:58

**WORSHIP MUSIC SET** -Sanctify

*Days of Elijah*

*Goodness of God*

*Living Hope*

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

**[Both Recorded & Live Worship]**

**READING OF SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 2:1-10**

In one of the core passages of the Bible, Paul explains how by God's grace that we are forgiven and reconciled to God when we put our faith in Jesus. This changes everything, especially how we live! Ephesians 2:1-10,

2:1 At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. 2 You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God's will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience. 3 At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else.

4-5 However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that he has for us. You are saved by God's grace! 6 And God raised us up and seated us in the heavens with Christ Jesus. 7 God did this to show future generations the greatness of his grace by the goodness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus.

8 You are saved by God's grace because of your faith. This salvation is God's gift. It's not something you possessed. 9 It's not something you did that you can be proud of. 10 Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

**UMW ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER -Pastor Andrew**

**GENERATIONAL BRIDGE -Pastor Andrew**

**MESSAGE: Swan Song #6: "Be Steadfast"**

**PP#1: Swan Song #6: "Be Steadfast"**

"Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives." -Ephesians 2:10,

Swan Song #6: Be Steadfast. Ephesians 2:10, "Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives."

Thirteen years ago I stepped up to this pulpit for the first time. Wow! Can you believe it? To some degree, it seems like yesterday. Yet, when I consider all that has happened in the past "baker's dozen" of years, it seems like long ago. From this pulpit I have preached many sermons, devotions, funerals, baptisms, and weddings. Today I enter this pulpit to preach my last sermon here. My mind is swirling. It is a time of celebration, as we celebrate the living God and as we witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who brings life, abundant and eternal. But it is also a day of heaviness, as I have grown to so love this church, the privilege of preaching here and being the lead pastor among you.

**PP#2: Pix of our family from 2009**

These past 13 years have truly been a blessing for me and my family. God sent us here among you as a gift to us as a family. When we came, Rebekah was in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, and Nathan in 1<sup>st</sup>. Anyone remember them scampering under the pews? You have received us, accepted us, truly took us in, loved us, put up with us, and most importantly, disciplined us. You have been Jesus to us. We have made so many good friends, and you have been that crucial gift in our lives of being our church family. We will treasure this time always. Your ministry to me has changed and affected me, molded and formed me to be the pastor I am today. When things at Rochester are going well, I'll give God thanks for you. When things are going poorly, I'll also probably blame you!

**PP#3:** *Image for Christian forgiveness*

I shudder to think of all the mistakes I've made while among you. I have been trying to think if there may be someone I haven't managed to insult or offend in some way. Yet you have extended graciousness toward me. I have tried to make apologies for all the different things that I have known I've done wrong, but I also now want to make a special intention to apologize for all those things that I have not known I have done to hurt any of you in any way. Often I didn't even realize what I had done. If I have hurt you, please accept my apologies, and I hope you will forgive me. Please know that my underlying motive has been to try to share Christ with you.

I pray you will extend the same graciousness, forgiveness and tolerance to Pastors Andrew and Cassi. I know they will be blessed to continue to be your pastors, but in new roles and ways.

**PP#4:** *Image of Forest Hills' sanctuary 13 years ago*

As you know, I've done some pretty crazy stuff from this pulpit, and as your pastor! The first month I was here I drug a recliner to the front of this church. Remember that? We moved the nursery, survived the "worship wars" of combining into one worship service I've called "mosaic," changed the altar furniture, moved the mail boxes, and even removed some coat racks...gasp! used all kinds of props, like marshmallow cream, and food, and rocks, and cactus flowers. I brought in a bunch of street signs one year, and I repeatedly showed clips of secular movies during worship! We remodeled and updated the main floor inside and out, celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a church, refocused our purpose to Love.Grow.Serve. and went through a time of discernment of Healthy Church Initiative and the Jubilee year of Sabbath Rest. I must admit, looking back, I must be hard on staff! Steve Ruter retired and Julie Graham Berninghouse left. Andrew and Amelia Buschena left for Cambridge. Scott Van Daalen left. And in my 13 years, we've had 7 office administrators. I just might be difficult to work with? Do I hear an "amen?"

**PP#5:** *Image of the burning paper on the cross for Good Friday 2017*

Yes, I have gotten a bit crazy from time to time. Do you remember the casket I brought in for Good Friday, or how I've almost burned the church down a couple of times on Ash Wednesday, or when I lit the cross on fire with all the flash papers with our sins written on it? But no matter how dramatic I've been, or how crazy I got, it has always been for the sole purpose of communicating Jesus Christ. I may have tried to be entertaining from time to time, but I hope it never distracted you from the core message of Jesus.

**PP#6:** Be Steadfast

So today, for my last sermon, I want to put away all my props and all my nuanced sermon plots, and instead I want to leave you with a very plain and simple version of what I have been trying to share with you all along. I want to use this last time as your preacher to make thoroughly sure that you've "gotten it." I want to share with you the same old story, for if any sermon doesn't share the same old story, it is not a sermon worth sharing.

**PP#7: Be Steadfast**

1. Sinner, have you heard about my Jesus?

Sinner, have you heard about my Jesus?

Some of you already know Him and can testify with me about what He has done for us—how now that we know him our lives are complete and full of meaning. Perhaps some of you can tell stories of what life was like before you knew Jesus: how living was merely surviving, was trying to find the energy to get up and face another day. How the daily grind becomes overwhelming, and you wonder how you can possibly go on. How fulfillment never came, and everything eventually turned hollow and boring. Empty was life, and all this world has to offer.

And now, some of you can stand up and testify how wonderful, how fantastic it is that Jesus lives within you. How He came into your life, offered you freedom from the traps of this world, how He lifted your burdens, and made you whole. Life now is still not easy, but it is full of joy. Life is no longer empty and flat, but exciting, rich and worth living.

**PP#8: Ephesians 2:1-10 (CEB)**

1 At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. 2 You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God's will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience. 3 At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else.

Paul talks about this in Ephesians. You heard this just a bit ago. Paul describes a bit of what life is like before we have Jesus. He says that we were dead in our sins when we followed this world. We craved and lusted after the things of our sinful nature and followed the desires of our thoughts. And Paul also says that in this state, God sends us His Spirit to convict us of our errors and prompts us to change our ways. We know that we were objects of God's wrath, and deserving only death.

**PP#9: Ephesians 2:1-10 (CEB)**

4-5 However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that He has for us. You are saved by God's grace! 6 And God raised us up and seated us in the heavens with Christ Jesus. 7 God did this to show future generations the greatness of His grace by the goodness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus.

But then there is the Good News: the Gospel of Jesus. Hear this fantastic news, verse 4, "However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that He has for us. You are saved by God's grace!" Hallelujah! There is no better message! We are made alive again! Praise God!

**PP#10: Ephesians 2:1-10 (CEB)**

8 You are saved by God's grace because of your faith. This salvation is God's gift. It's not something you possessed. 9 It's not something you did that you can be proud of. 10 Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

You see, while humans were stuck, were trapped, were bound—to the troubles of this world and to our own sin, God, in His great and infinite love for us, took action. He simply could not allow His beloved creation to continue on this way. So He intervened. He came into this world, He became a human and walked and talked among us in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught us about the love of God, and He showed us in His life how we are to live. However that wasn't good enough. For we needed the power to change. We were in a state where we simply could not help ourselves, and where we could not stop sinning. We needed to get out from under our sin so we could turn to God. But the price of this was too much. You see, because of our sin, we incurred the sentence of death, we deserved to die because we rejected God. So God decided to make the supreme sacrifice for us. He loved us so much that He himself, in the Son, died for us. Our sin crucified Jesus. And on that cross Christ, God Himself, died and paid the price for our sin. He died so that we might live. This is why Charles Wesley writes, "Alas! And did my Savior bleed, and did my sovereign die?...Was it for sins that I had done He groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity, grace unknown, and love beyond degree!" So, forgiveness won. Hallelujah!

But that's no all. Oh no, not with God! Death still had it's power. But God would not let death have the victory. God would not let sin be the winner. Rather He raised Christ from the dead and conquered sin and death. "Christ the Lord is risen today, hallelujah!" And the good part *for us* is that through Christ, God offers us all this same life He gave to his Son. This is why Paul writes, "But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace that you have been saved." Grace...a free gift. All we have to do is turn to God, declare His wonderful acts, accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, and be filled with His Spirit. For Paul says that when we do this we are raised up with Christ and are seated with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. All we have to do is believe and offer ourselves to him. There is no cost, it is simply out of God's love for us. Paul says, verse 8, "You are saved by God's grace because of your faith. This salvation is God's gift."

**PP#11: Be Steadfast**

1. Sinner, have you heard about my Jesus?
2. Choose to be a disciple of Jesus

God still offers that great gift. If God is not in charge of your life, give it to Him now. Turn yourselves over to Him and accept His divine love and mercy. Experience Him deeply and fully. Receive the Blessed Assurance, knowing that you are God's child and that you will live with Him forever. Give your life to Him. Let Him have your future. Make Him your personal Lord and Savior. Choose to become a disciple of Jesus! All you do is accept...open up...receive. Invite Christ into your heart now!

**PP#12: Be Steadfast**

1. Sinner, have you heard about my Jesus?
2. Choose to be a disciple of Jesus
3. Recommit to your discipleship

There are some of you who have already done this and have felt the wonderful joy flood into your soul. You know what it is like to have your hearts set aflame, to feel the newness of God's grace. But maybe that was a while ago. Life has gotten on, and it is tiring. You have slowly forgotten what it is like to drink deeply from the waters of life. You have grown too comfortable, to settled, to complacent. You have slipped into following Jesus mostly by mental ascent, but not in discipline. Jesus is no longer your primary focus. And in so doing, you forfeit your abundant living. You compromise your blessing. You need to re-commit your lives to Christ. Give all of it to him, not just your spare moments. Christ must not be simply another part of your life, He needs to BE your life—all of it. The Holy Spirit must control the different parts of your life. He needs to be in the driver's seat. He must be the complete Lord. He will be either Lord of all of you or Lord of none of you. Now is the time to get back on track. Call upon His Spirit now, that Spirit which is within you, to renew your commitment to God. Reaffirm your life with Christ. Make Him your Lord anew. Experience again what it is like to have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, and to live fully and abundantly again. Jesus awaits your invitation.

**PP#13:** *Image of Evangel UMC*

I must go to Rochester. I will not be your pastor any more. You have carried this church up to this moment, and I have walked part of that journey with you. Now you go on boldly without me. God has a plan and a future for you, for this church. God has given you good future pastoral leadership. But you must still carry this ministry.

To encourage you to carry on, I want to put before you the entire book of 2 John. Let's read it together. By now you would not be surprised if a serve I led tended to go on a bit. But be of good cheer, 2 John is the shortest book of the Bible. It is only 13 verses! Turn to it now.

**PP#14:** 2 John 1:1-13 (CEB)

1 From the elder.

To the chosen gentlewoman and her children, whom I truly love (and I am not the only one, but also all who know the truth), 2 because of the truth that remains with us and will be with us forever.

3 Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, will be ours who live in truth and love.

The apostle John, in his older age, writes to a church. He calls the church "the chosen lady." Today let's hear this "lady" as Forest Hills United Methodist Church. Let's take a look at what he tells us. 2 John,

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"3 Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, will be ours who live in truth and love."

**PP#15:** 2 John 1:1-13 (CEB)

4 I was overjoyed to find some of your children living in the truth, just as we had been commanded by the Father. 5 Now, dear friends, I am requesting that we love each other.

It's not as though I'm writing a new command to you, but it's one we have had from the beginning. 6 This is love: that we live according to his commands. This is the command that you heard from the beginning: live in love.

“4 I was overjoyed to find some of your children living in the truth, just as we had been commanded by the Father. 5 Now, dear friends, I am requesting that we love each other. It's not as though I'm writing a new command to you, but it's one we have had from the beginning. 6 This is love: that we live according to his commands. This is the command that you heard from the beginning: live in love.”

**PP#16:** 2 John 1:1-13 (CEB)

7 Many deceivers have gone into the world who do not confess that Jesus Christ came as a human being. This kind of person is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves so that you don't lose what we've worked for but instead receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not continue in the teaching about Christ does not have God. Whoever continues in this teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 Whoever comes to you who does not affirm this teaching should neither be received nor welcomed into your home, 11 because welcoming people like that is the same thing as sharing in their evil actions.

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**PP#17:** 2 John 1:1-13 (CEB)

12 I have a lot to tell you. I don't want to use paper and ink, but I hope to visit you and talk with you face-to-face, so that our joy can be complete. 13 Your chosen sister's children greet you.

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**PP#18:** Be Steadfast

1. Sinner, have you heard about my Jesus?
2. Choose to be a disciple of Jesus
3. Recommit to your discipleship
4. Love one another

Did you hear the charge? You are to continue in the love of Christ faithfully. How? First of all, he instructs: you need to walk in the truth. You see, there is only one truth: the Gospel. The rest is simply lies or half-truths. Walk in the truth. And how do we do this? He says, “love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to Jesus Christ's commands. As you have heard from the

beginning, His command is that you walk in love.” Christians are about the business of love. If you get nothing else right, get this one. Love one another. Give this your full energy, your full focus, your every effort.

But John gives a warning. He says that there are deceivers about. They are full of lies and spread something other than the truth. Some, he says, do not acknowledge that Jesus Christ came as a human to die for our sins! Such people are deceivers—do not follow them. He says anyone who does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God, but whoever continues in the teaching has God the Father and the Son in his life. John’s words are still for us today: If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not follow him! Do not believe him! These teachers may come in many different shapes and forms. Some may come with high degrees from universities. Some may come with marvelously spoken words. Some may come even as preachers and ministers! Yes, it is true.

**PP#19: Be Steadfast**

1. Sinner, have you heard about my Jesus?
2. Choose to be a disciple of Jesus
3. Recommit to your discipleship
4. Love one another
5. Test all things against the Gospel

Test them. Do they speak the truth? Do they know Jesus Christ? Are they walking in love? If not, challenge them. Test them against the truth as revealed in the Scriptures. Start with me! Test all that I have ever said. Try it against the Bible. Does it fit? If not, tell me about it. You do me, or any other preacher, no favor by keeping silent and letting me continue in darkness and falsehood. Rather you do me harm, and you are not loving me with truth. God has given you the Holy Spirit inside you. Spend time daily with the Holy Bible so the Spirit can confirm what is true, and alert what is not true. Listen for the voice of God in your hearts. This is how to walk in the truth.

**PP#20: Be Steadfast: 1 Corinthians 15:58**

- “Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know, your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (KJV)
- “Stand firm, unshakable, excelling in the work of the Lord as always, because you know that your labor isn’t going to be for nothing in the Lord.” (CEB)

One final aid in keeping you focused on Christ...I leave you with my life’s verse. God has given this verse to me for special encouragement since I have been a boy. I want to share it as one last gift to you. It is 1 Corinthians 15:58. I memorized it in the King James version, so that’s how I’ll recite it. “Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know, your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

It gets tough. Life is not easy or all roses. There will be times of trial and suffering. But do not waver. Do not grow weak. Take all things to the Lord in prayer. Never stop doing the Lord’s work. Seek the Lord and find out what He wants you to do. And follow to its complete end, no matter what the cost. Then be steadfast in doing it. Don’t just *abide* in the Lord’s work...*abound* in it! Do not budge in your faith. Take heart. Be of good cheer. For you know that your efforts in the Lord’s work are never—and it does say never—in vain or futile. They may seem that way from time to time. But don’t let it get the best of you. Even if absolutely everything goes wrong and the whole



world is against you: stand firm. Abound in the work of the Lord. You have life abundant and eternal!

**PP#21:** *Image for a pastor's blessing*

There is so much more I would love to tell you. Our Lord is so great. But I stop with this. So, above all that I have said and done these past 13 years among you, and if you remember nothing else, remember this: Give yourself to Christ: you will find new life. Re-commit yourself to Christ: you will find blessings innumerable. Be sold out for Christ: you will find life worth living. Walk in the truth, reject what is false. Love one another. And be steadfast, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

May the Holy Spirit lead you on to perfection.

Amen.

**[Live Worship Only] CLOSING SONG:** *And Can It Be that I Should Gain* -Sanctify

**INSTALLATION OF PASTORS ANDREW AND CASSI** -Marilee Leonard and Gina Lindholm

Book of Worship, pages 595 - 598

**OFFERING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS** -Pastor Andrew

Farewell reception immediately following the service.

**MEMORY VERSE** -Pastor Andrew

“Stand firm, unshakable, excelling in the work of the Lord as always, because you know that your labor isn’t going to be for nothing in the Lord.” -1 Cor. 15:58

**BENEDICTION** -Pastor Andrew

**POSTLUDE** -Sanctify (live)