

Breakfast is at 8 on Saturday
Morning session at
Lunch is at
Dinner is at 5:30

Reference to Acts 20 we are in a 2nd story room.

The speaker is named bud and is more than 70 years old, so he is living on bonus time. He grew up on Nebraska and after meeting his wife, and getting married on Sept. 7, 1958, he became preacher bud near the gulf of Mexico. People wore their shoes around their necks on the way to church, but wore them inside of the church. He learned what the body of Christ could be when it was honest. He finished seminary and then served a church in southern Illinois where there were many blue collar workers and the church split and then merged again. Their first merge Sunday was his first Sunday. He was there for five years. Then he was called to Mercer Island in Seattle. Upon his arrival, he found 35 disheartened people. It was boring because you could visit everyone in the church in a week. He had a 5 year plan and a 10 year plan. He did the 5 year plan in 3 months and the 10 year plan in 2 years. He got really busy and his wife suffered and became married. Whether you are a pastor or a lay person, your #1 assignment from God is your family (don't neglect your wife). Have a weekly date with your wife. Allow her to set the agenda or cancel it altogether.

He served Mercer Island Community church for 26 years and then he tried to retire, so he went a long ways away. Then he went to Lucerne Switzerland (the only English speaking church in the nation). Everyone was there. He had a ball. The church mandated that I keep the main thing the main thing (Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost). The story of Moses is a great story. God saved Moses as a baby and Moses had nothing to do with it (God set him up 400 years earlier).

When Stephen was murdered, we learned that Moses was not an ordinary child. Moses was educated in the palace of the chief of state of the most powerful nation of the world at the time. Then he trashed the whole thing by killing the Egyptian who was mistreating a Hebrew. How could this guy have blown it so bad that he became so useless for 40 years in the back side of the desert?

The story of Exodus is analogous to our own salvation stories? How often have we burned with holy ambition and dreamed godly dreams, and then a few weeks later, we wake up to a sense of futility? We ought to be focusing on what is central (the main thing). Since his retirement, the speaker has been acting as an interim pastor and he loves it because everyone knows he is not going to be there forever and he can leave at any time that he would like to.

The speaker can remember that sometimes he has failed to make the main thing the main thing.

When Moses decided what to do, he looked every direction except up. Are you man conscious or are you God conscious? Commit yourself to tasks that God calls you to. Gal 1:10, Col 3:23 (even ping-pong).

God can get along without us, but we can't get along without God. Moses thought, "I am needed here" and he rolled up his sleeves and did something.

God doesn't need our abilities, only our availability.

Most people reject the Bible on the basis of research that would cause freshmen to fail.

Christians are guilty of hero worship (Mclarin, Mark Driscoll, Hal Linsey (the late great planet earth)). Hal Linsey had a friend in the speaker's congregation. The first time Hal Linsey came to church, the speaker wished that he had prepared his sermon better. People reacted inappropriately.

God called Moses by name when Moses stopped to check the bush out.

If you have been born again, or come to new life in Christ or become a product of divine obstetrics what you need is what you've got. He doesn't give us strength to do ministry, he is our strength. If you haven't, be smart like Moses and check it out. Any old bush will do as long as God is in the bush.

Nehemiah and Esther will be given equal time tomorrow.

Rehash of last night. Bud was stressing that its not your ability, but your availability. Some of you need to be more availability. You don't do anything until after there is already a big fire going. Bring your gifts out and throw them on the table.

A lot of followers of Christ think that they need to be in front if they are going to be effective. Moses did not see himself as a front man and he resisted God's invitation to become a front man. God gave Moses some good front man tricks.

Nehemiah was a waiter and not a front man. Life is difficult and many people know this. Isaiah 43 says things like, "*when* you come to the waters, fires, etc.).

Israel had become a significant nation under God's blessing, but then they did their own thing and came under God's judgment because of their sinful indifference to God.

Nehemiah heard bad news about his home town and he prayed about it. (Neh 1:5->)

Neh's confession of sin shows that the bad things that happened to Jerusalem were not a result of God's negligence, but of the sins of the Jews.

Nehemiah prayed for four months through confession and planning. Then the king noticed

Chapters 3 through 5 are about wall building and resistance. The first of these attacks was belittling. When the speaker started out in the ministry, he had to struggle against the feeling that everyone else was picking peanuts off of his head. People made fun of Nehemiah. In chapter six, you see that the opposition is lead by three people.

Nehemiah delegated responsibilities for building the wall appropriately. He had people rebuild portions of the wall near their own houses (perhaps because that's really motivating).

One of the most helpful things we can do to not major in minors is to remember what God has called us to (Nehemiah 6:3).

In 1960 there was a huge purge in Indonesia. It is the largest Islamic nation in the world. One of the islands is Hindu. The government gave the order to get rid of the communists, but the order was confusing and lots of Christians died too.

Another attack strategy is direct rumors and threats (6:5-7)

1. Start the task with prayer
 - a. Clean the slate in honest confession and repentance
 - b. Trust the promises of God
2. Be sure that your vision is from God
 - a. Don't get your vision from a book
 - b. From someone else's dream

c. An upset stomach

3. Plan with wisdom and with clarity (2:5)
4. Understand that you are not leading unless someone is following (2:18)
5. Learn to delegate wisely
6. Be prepared for opposition (opposition varies directly as effectiveness)
7. Understand and discern and be prepared for the opposition to come in a whole lot of different forms
8. be a leader who knows that he is under orders
9. Keep Praying
10. Refuse to retaliate against your opposition (remember story of CE in Indonesia)
11. So we rebuilt the wall (11:6)
12. Remember critics mobilize, leaders encourage (be affirmers)
13. Champion the cause of justice (chapter 5)
14. Keep the main thing the main thing (avoid the distractions)
15. Keep on keeping on (chapter 6 verse 3)

What has your lifestyle testified to? Every man is going to give an account to God for time spent. Ask yourself, “Lord, have I even laid my life before you? Did I actually die to myself and admit that God has provided the supreme way?”

It is always interesting to accept an invitation to address a bunch of people when I only know one of them. I had no idea what to accept, but I figured that if Swanny is involved, there must be some life. I am very glad to have met all of you and spoken with those of you to whom I have spoken to.

Few things in life do I enjoy more than a good book. I am a Robert Lundland fan. I’ve read everything that he wrote. He is dead now. Clancy has too many technical details. My idea of an ideal vacation is to visit a beach with a suitcase full of books. My wife’s idea of the ideal vacation is to get into the car and drive across the country and visit everyone we’ve ever met etc.

The book of Esther is a fun story because it reads like a novel. At the center of the story is a girl named Hadasa (it means Esther). Esther had very little going for her. She was part of an ethnic minority and an orphan being raised by her cousin. The society regarded women as possessions. The king ruled from India to northern Egypt. Fifty years, earlier, King Cyrus allowed Jews to return to Israel, but a bunch of them didn’t want to go because they had become adapted to the place of their captivity. They lost their sense of identity of God’s chosen people. For this reason, you should continue in fellowship with God’s church. Isolation will destroy you and tear you down. This is not the same as solitude. Don’t distance yourself from the church. The church has always been and always will be an assembly of rescued warts. We are sinners saved by grace. Don’t you forget it and stop acting like it. Do stop acting like sinners...

In Switzerland, I started out and there was a church committee. A member of the church committee noticed that I used the Bible so much and asked why that was. Another woman was troubled that I used the word *sin* so often. She thought that sin was a hangover from the Victorian era.

The Jews in Persia had left their identity. King Xerxes liked to party, so he called in the leaders of his 127 provinces and had a 6 months party. At the end of 6 months party, he had a 7 day party for his staff. He sent word for Vashti to show up and wear her crown so that he could show her off. He was embarrassed because she refused. The wise guys said: 1:16 *Then Memucan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, “Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes.”*¹

So Xerxes punished Vashti. Xerxes then began to get lonely and became depressed and sad and his advisers advised him to replace her. So each of the 127 provinces sent a beautiful virgin to Xerxes palace. Esther was such a person and she beat out the 126.

¹*The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996, c1984 (electronic ed.) (Es 1:16). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Later, Esther's cousin Mordecai overheard an assassination plot and told Esther about it. She told the king about it and gave credit to Mordecai.

Why should I keep writing this. It is written already.

Why have we just been told this dizzy story? If you have read Esther carefully, you have noticed that God is not mentioned even once. What is it doing in the Bible

Lessons:

1. God is at work in our lives even when we don't see it.
 - a. God's providence is obvious
 - b. When I retold this story, I said, "It just so happened..."
 - c. God is so great that He can do His work through any circumstance to get what he wants done
 - d. Don't look for miracles because that will cause you to overlook God's actions in the pedestrian circumstances of our lives
 - e. Don't think that God should act providentially to make you comfortable or successful. You should want to become godly instead.
2. Be prepared to experience God's work through you (prepare yourself for God to use you by studying, praying, etc.)
 - a. Moses, Nehemiah, Joshua.
 - b. Joshua called the people together and said "consecrate yourself because tomorrow, God's is going to do some great stuff (Joshua 5). Consecration comes first
 - c. Gideon was in a winepress in the bottom of a valley, trying to thresh grain where there is no breeze. He was hailed as a mighty warrior because that was God's vision of us.
 - d. Esther 4 indicates that preparation is important.
 - e. Before the Midianites could be conquered, Baal had to be done away with
3. God's work in this world is almost always mysterious (beyond our explanation)
 - a. I get creeped out by people who think that they have God figured out.
 - b. We have gotten so familiar with God that we refer to Jesus and his disciples as JC and the guys.
 - c. God doesn't run on tracks
 - d. When you sense the Holy Spirit and you have checked it out, be bold in faith
 - e. God's deliverance will come and it may be through you
4. Always remember the potential impact of one person
 - a. Americans are hung up on numbers. "There must have been 300 people in church today and there wasn't a dry eye in the place." They may all have had an allergy.
 - b. Stories about influencers (Alice Headland and Martha Spensor, Frank Springer, Ed Johnson)
 - c. My dad fell in love with my wife before I did. He said, But if you would like to invite her to Easter, it's alright with me. So I called her and invited

her and she was all excited. Ten days before the Easter break was to occur, she canceled because word got to her in Chicago about the ways he was living at the University. Bud got dumped for God.

"Guests of my life,
You came in the early dawn,
And you came in the night.
Your name was uttered by the spring flowers
And the showers of rain.
You brought the harp into my life,
And you brought the lamp.
After you had taken your leave
I found God's footprints on the floor.
Now I am at the end of my pilgrimage,
I leave in the evening flowers of worship,
My salutations to you all."

Rabindranath Tagore