



Summer Speaker Series

Week 1 – Who’s Your Storyteller & Week 2 – Stronger. Than. Ever.

Check-in

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... since our series is guest speakers, who is the best speaker you’ve ever heard live? Was it a Ted Talk? (Who is Ted, anyway?) Maybe it was conference with Brene Brown, also known as the best day of your life?

Opening Prayer

Author of our Lives, allow us to give up control of the pen,
and let you write the chapters of our lives,
having faith that you will give us the strength to live for you.

Introduction

Because we know you need a break from hearing Pastor Mike’s voice each week, we’re proud to present our Summer Speaker Series! There

are so many great voices that can bring new perspectives to our lives and faith. So, stay tuned! This one's gonna be fun. Our first two speakers were our very own Shelly Harvey and our District Superintendent, Rev. Allynn Walker. (If you missed their reflections at Sunday worship, go back and watch on our mobile app, website, or catch the whole worship on our Facebook page... worth it!) Shelly began with a reflection on the story of Abram and Sarai (or Abraham and Sarah, pre-name-change,) and how we like to take control of the story of our lives, grabbing the pen and writing it ourselves.

Warm-up Question: If you were to write a story of your life, what would the genre be? Romantic, Nicholas Sparks novel? Mystery-thriller? Choose-Your-Own-Adventure? Maybe it would be a slapstick, crap-show of a comedy with a lot of unwritten pages?

Scripture & Reflection

Shelly gave us a powerful reflection upon a very difficult story from the Old Testament book of Genesis in which Sarai, unable to have children, decides to take control of the situation.

Read Genesis, chapter 16, verses 1 to 5.

Sarai chose to take the pen and write her story herself. With an exceptional parallel to the story of Skeeter in the movie *Bedtime Stories*, Shelly explained how, as the story of our lives is being written, we try to take control and write it ourselves. We like to attempt to control the outcome of our lives, and often learn that the more we try

to control it, the less control we actually have. Quit trying to steal the pen. Trust the Author.

Question 1: This question seems to pop up in series here and there, and has become a common one for us. So, consider this a check-up. Scale of 1 to 10, how well do you do at giving up control? Do you trust God to write your story, or have you stolen the pen, and written that sucker out of ink?

Rev. Allyn Walker then followed Shelly's reflection perfectly with a discussion on how to be "Stronger than ever" in our faith. See, part of giving up the pen means having faith that God will take care of us.

Read Hebrews, chapter 11, verses 1 to 3, and 6.

Rev. Walker then gave us a few examples of the faith of those "ancients" mentioned in verse 2: Moses, Elijah, and the lepers healed by Jesus. We learn from these models of faith that we don't receive courage by simply praying for it, then sitting on the couch waiting to be struck with a magic stick. Rather, God grants us strength *on the way* as we move forward in the face of difficult situations. "If you want to be stronger in your faith, put one foot in front of the other. You won't get it sitting on the couch."

Question 2: What situation are you facing where you are asking God for strength and courage? Are you just sitting on the couch waiting to

be struck with those virtues? What would putting one foot in front of the other look like?

Closing

Shelly and Rev. Walker gave us an excellent pair of reflections on the interplay between control and faith. Shelly challenged us to give the pen back to God and allow God to write the story of our lives. Rev. Walker then suggested, in order to do that, to give control back to God, we must have faith... and the strength and courage of faith come when we put one foot in front of the other, moving forward. Your challenge this week is to ask yourself, “what situations in my life am I trying to control?” And then give God back the pen, having faith that you will be granted strength as you move forward in life, knowing God will provide for your future.

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.

Close in prayer.