

# Retirement Sermon

Rev. Dr. Roderick J. Miller

## 1. Where Am I/We Going?

I'm not stopping - just changing gears!

We are always in the midst of transitions. I remember other transitions in my life. I spoke at my high school graduation. It rained and we were outside on the football field. Somebody brought a snake onto the field. I spoke about hope and opportunity.

I served as a US - 2 home missionary (similar to Peace Corps and Vista) in Camden, NJ. 1976 Eddie Eisinger - the neighborhood bully - thanked me for being with him.

Seminary graduation in 1982 - it was held at the Washington Hebrew Congregation - I organized a communion service just for the graduating class.

This stage in my life - is about moving from adult to elder: Elders....  
Pass on specific work and wisdom  
Model life purpose and maturity – more insightful respect and admiration of others, drawing out other's gifts.  
Remain as physically and mentally active as possible in order to be 'of use' and 'enjoy life.'  
Connect young people and society to mysteries of success, compassion, freedom and faith – modeling humility and self-confidence

## 2. What have I been about?

I Was about more - now I am about less.  
I Was about success - now I am about faithfulness.  
I Was about growth and change - now I am about gratitude for everything that is.  
I Was about proving - now about being in the present  
I Was about doing things right - now I am about doing the right thing.  
I Was about being seen - now I am about seeing.  
I Was about not wanting to experience pain, grief and sadness - now I am about accepting pain, grief and sadness as a part of life.  
I Was about struggling to control and feeling out of control - now I am about allowing my desire to control fade

On my first Sunday at TUMC, I sang the song - People get ready there's a train a coming - picking up passengers - coast to coast -- You don't need no baggage, you just get on board All you need is faith to hear the diesels hummin' Don't need no ticket, you just thank the Lord Now I am less sure about where God is leading everyone - and am clearer about where God is leading me.

Today I sing - I want to walk as a child of the light - I want to be like Jesus. In him there is no darkness at all - the night and the day are both alike - shine in my heart Lord Jesus.

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CS Lewis: "Faith is not a matter of our hearing and trying to carry it out. It is the real, actual Son of God by your side. He is beginning to turn you into the same kind of person as himself. He is beginning to inject his kind of life into you."

St. Francis of Assisi - Some call him a combination of a mystic and a prophet. Preach the Gospel at all times and if necessary, use words. Why aren't you doing what you say you believe? !Francis fell in love with the humanity and humility of Jesus. For him Jesus was someone to actually imitate and not just to worship as divine. I totally identify with St. Francis in his approach and his desire.

I have often asked God - What am I to teach? Preach? Live? The answer I received was: "Teach, preach and live me. Be me. I in you and you in me." That is what I have been about.

In Author Roger Housden's book "Risking Everything", he says- "Have you ever longed for a life in which every part of you is entirely used up? ... Have you dared to take a step forward and down into the unknown. "There is, I believe, a longing in many of us, often unrequited, to give ourselves utterly to our lives.. [to feel that]... our failures, our losses, our sufferings of all kinds, are inextricably woven into everything else - into the flowers, the sunrise, the great achievements of mankind, and into our own successes, too. It is all one great swirling, unending creation, and every last drop of our life, its darkness as well as its light, has its part to play." P79

I often talked about call at TUMC. Listening. Paying attention. Giving space, time and prayer to it. I am following my call by creating "Bridge Crossing Leaders" - my new ministry with pastors and other leaders. Crossing the bridge from what is to what can be - from what is known to what is as yet unknown - from past to present and future. I am following it.

From a retreat at the beach before I accepted the call to come to TUMC - the worship refrain was:"May we surrender to your tides of transformation, God." I pray that you and I will do just that.

### 3. Closing Thoughts

Jeremiah 29 and Deuteronomy 30 were and are in front of my mind.

(11) For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)

(11) For this command which I am giving you today is not too wondrous or remote for you.

(12) It is not in the heavens, that you should say, "Who will go up to the heavens to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may do it?"

(13) Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross the sea to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may do it?"

(14) No, it is something very near to you, in your mouth\* and in your heart, to do it.

(Deuteronomy 30: 11-14)

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Closing quotes:

From Middle Ages Mystic - Meister Eckhart:

For this joy is close to you, it is in you!

None of you has a spirit so heavy, nor an intelligence so feeble,

None of you you is so far from God

Not to be able to find this joy in Him.

From Rene Descartes - a Letter to Princess Elizabeth:

It is useful to have a strong conviction that the things which you undertake without repugnance, and with the freedom which ordinarily accompanies joy will not fail to succeed well.

From theologian Teilhard de Chardin:

Plunge into matter, plunge into God. By means of all created things, without exception, the divine assails us, penetrates us, molds us.

We imagine it as distant and inaccessible whereas, in fact, we live steeped in its burning layers.

This past Friday night was a full moon -- according to the Talmud: when a person is afraid to walk at night, a burning torch is worth 2 companions and a full moon is worth 3.

And finally a quote from my journal as dawn was breaking on the beach:

The colors of the sunrise were of a constantly evolving masterpiece. A team of clouds - band after band - coming from a single source where the sun was to rise, and lifting up - out and away in waves of color - moving to grey and dark up and in back of me - where the moon was. colors from pink to orange to yellow to white to shimmering silver. I want to see the sunrise. Light from below. I want to experience it. I want to know it again.

Sing together the last verse of "Away in a Manger" - and sing in the plural:

*"Be near us, Lord Jesus, we ask thee to stay - close by us forever and love us, we pray. Bless all the dear children in thy tender care. And fit us for heaven to live with thee there."*