

HEIR CONDITIONERS

Meditation, May 27, 2018

Trinity Sunday/Youth Sunday/Memorial Day

Texts: Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Romans 8:12-17

I said this last year at this time, and I'll say it again right now: Tomorrow is Memorial Day, when we honor the memory of those of our armed forces who gave their lives to secure the liberation and defend the freedom of so many, including us, around this world. I'm personally convinced the best thing we can do to show our gratitude and honor their memory is to determine to exercise our freedom responsibly ... *we want to see freedom not so much as the right to do as we choose, but as the opportunity to choose to do what is right.* Let me reiterate: Freedom is not so much the right to do as we choose as it is the opportunity to choose to do what is right.

And today is Youth Sunday. I also said this last year at this time, and I'll say it again right now: I want to especially thank all the dedicated volunteers and church staff, all the devoted parents and family members, all the good friends and loving church members who are doing all they can to help these young women and men entrusted to this church's care to learn to exercise their freedom responsibly. Thank you to all who working to help them learn to choose what is good and right, to train them up in the way they should go, by encouraging them to become young men and women of faith, integrity and honor ... and thank you, in deference to our reading from Romans, for being **Heir Conditioners**. The meditation title is not pronounced Hair Conditioners; this is not about the virtues of Pantene, Loreal or Suave. Nor is it A-I-R Conditioners, although that's certainly been very nice to have in this sanctuary these past sixteen years (*yes, it was the summer of 2002 it was installed*). No, it's **Heir Conditioners**; "heir" as in one who receives an inheritance. Romans 8:16 "*... the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now, if we are children, then we are heirs -- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.*" It is literally in the Will of God that, in Jesus Christ and through His death, we are made heirs. And in a nutshell, it might be said that's what the ministry of this church is all about ... helping all of us, but especially our young people, to be good stewards of our rich inheritance ... an inheritance, by the way, we begin to receive and enjoy in THIS life and right on into eternity.

If you've been in this congregation for awhile, you'll also know I've been long convinced that one of the most effective ministries of heir conditioning, and especially in ministry with young people, is to do all we can to provide *joyful* memories, *good* memories. Memories of joy, memories of happiness, memories of service in mission, memories of healthy relationships, memories of good clean fun, memories of wholesome and enjoyable activities, memories of loving, supportive, lasting friendships ... as well as good memories of adults who love and encourage and nurture and build up, rather than bad memories of adults who misuse or abuse or discourage and beat down. Such happy memories of joy in our pasts do much to help condition us to live joyfully, confidently and freely in our presents and our futures.

We are all about making happy memories of laughing *with* God, sharing His joy, enjoying our glorious inheritance as He would have us enjoy it ... for He really does want us to live well, to enjoy life in all its fullness, beginning right now and continuing on into eternity! We have no interest in memories of life lived laughing *at* God, which is a sad phenomenon in our increasingly secularized culture. When we laugh *at* God, when we join with the secular, cynical voices that mock piety, scoff at morality, chastity, integrity, honor, reverence and make light of God and His good ways ... in short, when we don't take God seriously and live accordingly ... more often than not that makes for really *bad* memories, regretful memories, destructive memories, painful memories, memories that continue to wound and cripple rather than heal and/or inspire. People laugh *at* God when they take Him lightly, when they don't understand Him, or they cynically laugh at God because they think He is hopelessly irrelevant to their situation(s). I'm also convinced **ONLY** those who take God seriously really understand the sheer delight of laughing with God, enjoying His good gifts, living life as He designed it to be lived.

MAKING GOOD MEMORIES. That's a large part of what we try to do here, that's a large part of how we carry out the work of "heir conditioning." What a way to choose to use our freedom. What a way to honor the sacrifice of those we honor tomorrow. And what a way to honor the sacrifice of the One who fought the ultimate battle and made the ultimate sacrifice that we might receive this rich and glorious inheritance.