

Acts 10:34-43

34 Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ — he is Lord of all. 37 That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40 but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

The Scripture reveals a changed Peter. He had pledged his life to Jesus but then hid during the persecution of Jesus. Now he gives bold eye witness testimony. He states the facts as they are. God gave us Jesus. People crucified Jesus. God raised Jesus on the 3rd day. He and the other disciples are eye witnesses to these events. Believers get salvation. The lesson is about the leadership of Peter, he evolves into a changed person, from being a follower of Jesus to being a leader for Jesus.

Leadership in the church today is difficult. Each of us has inadequacies, are unprepared, and lack training. We have personal relationship problems, fear due to past experiences, and human weaknesses. We all want a church that is just, loving, faithful, and effective but we accept a church that is slow to change. It is like a large ship in the ocean with a small boat rudder.

Today we have our annual installation service. Many of you may be familiar with the name Dick Hamm., He is a former General Minister of the Christian Church. In his book *Recreating the Church: Leadership for the Postmodern Age*, he explains how our language shapes our assumptions. Parts are installed and appliances are installed and we have installation services. When we associate being installed it is like a machine that requires parts. Parts are installed into the machine in order to make it work like it is designed to work. When we join a church, we not only inherit the institution, we also inherit all of its assumptions. However, the church is much more than an institution. The church is the body of the living Christ. The church is not a machine but a living organism, a living body with living parts. All of the parts are parts of the living Christ. The various parts of a living body develop and grow according to the DNA of the body.

I sometimes have trouble with the mechanics of my cars. My Suburban has over 300,000 miles, Brenda's Impala has close to 200,000 miles on it and Chris's Explorer has over 200,000 miles on it. I drive them until they die. Needless to say, I am often in need of a good mechanic. Recently I had a bad part that had to be replaced. When the mechanic replaces a part, it is installed. However, with a living body, parts are regenerated. They live and grow with the body and become one with the body. This means that the body itself grows and changes in response to the environment. The

transplanted part changes and becomes one with the rest of the body. Our language shapes our interpretations. The installation is a service call when what we need is a call to service. You are chosen by God. You are called to service.

Leadership is a corporate activity. It is not something that one person does, all members have a shared responsibility to support and hold accountable all of the other members. The institution that we inherited is the church that Jesus built. We love the church because we love Jesus. So, our leadership is not about our skill and willingness, it is about taking a position of love. Leadership is not a matter of power; leadership is a matter of empowering others to discover their gifts and develop these gifts to the benefit of the body. When you work with the rest of the body you receive God's blessing. It is a wonderful joy to respond to God's love. Being a church moderator is a joy of responding to God's love. Whether it is an elder, deacon, committee member, or serving communion, all of the positions in the life of the church receive great joy in responding to God's love. I repeat for emphasis – when you do ministry and mission you receive great joy in responding to God's love. Like Peter, it is a matter of evolution; you evolve as a member of the body. It is not so much a matter of going to church as it is a matter of being in the body of Christ.

In leadership positions the mission brings a blessing of joy and fellowship. The happiest moments of life are when you do things with your friends and loved ones. There is perpetual joy that compounds exponentially when you do things together. You look forward to doing all you can, not just to be a part of the body of Christ but to do your part for the body of Christ, for faithful and effective ministry within the realm of contemporary society.