

Good morning. Thank you all for being here. [maybe] It's good to see some familiar faces that I haven't seen in a while. Because it's new members Sunday, I promised Pastor Michelle to keep this sermon short. I hope what I have to say will be worthy of your time and attention.

May the words from my mouth and meditations of all our heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, Our Rock and our Redeemer.

After my life altering event about half year ago, I feel compelled to share my experience with you, my church family. I haven't fully recovered yet, my speech is still slurred and my cognitive ability is still on the mend. But I feel safe speaking in public, especially to my friends [pause.] And, thanks to Donald Trump for his lowering of the “Brow Bar” for public speaking, I think I'll be allowed a few takes mistakes this morning!

I'm going to tell you a story. Because I was unconscious during the first party of this story, I will refer to myself in the third person. Some of you have heard this story before, so apologize for repeating myself and I hope you will indulge me one more time.

It was a Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, Dennis felt tired that morning, but he managed to get up early to work out. A half hour later, he nearly died on the exercise room floor at local YMCA. A very weak and irregular heartbeat, and reports from the EMT and SJFD personnel that responded to the 911 call, indicated that he was on his way out.

Even after chest-compressions by his wife and several shocks from an AED, administered by his friends at the Y and also by the EMT people, his pulse did not improve. He spent the next 12 days at both Kaiser and Stanford hospitals in their Intensive Coronary Care Units, The Kaiser medical team put him into an induced coma for the first day to minimize brain ischemia due to low blood flow, but his heart didn't like being in hyperthermia. So, he was taken off life-support, aside from a half dozen IV's, and he remained unconscious and motionless.

His family and his wife, Judy, remained at his bedside for another three hours. Judy grew impatient waiting for Dennis to wake up. Finally she pleaded, “Dennis, if you love me, squeeze my hand, now!” While still unconscious, Dennis responded to her and squeezed her hand. Judy started to cry for the first time since his collapse at the Y.

The next task, for Dennis, was to open his eyes. Remember the Reading from first Kings? The passage continues with, "Then Solomon awoke; it had been a dream."

I was probably just as confused as Solomon was when I finally opened my eyes. I wondered...Had this just been a dream? I felt lost. Like Solomon, I did not know how to go out or come in. and reading continues ... "I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; ... If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life."

What I needed was a clear sign from God to tell me why I was still alive. God knows I can be thick, and need specific instructions to move forward. Then I remembered that God is still speaking, and patiently I must continue to listen.

Since my near-death experience, I have been asking for understanding to discern what is right. I've been given a second chance to, serve God I believe? But how do I do that? Lighting incense, like Solomon, didn't seem to be the answer for me.

### **I have three questions.**

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- 1) Q How do I or you as individuals serve God? [listen] You and I probably all strive to follow God's statutes and discern what is right, but how do you put that into action? By contributing money, serve communion, greeting each other on Sunday morning, ushering, reading scripture, preaching from your heart, singing your heart out, keeping the bulletin board up to date, serving on committees, helping fellow congregants in times of need, and planning social events to strengthen our relationships with each other...just to name a few.

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- 2) Q How do we as a church, serve God? One Great Hour of Sharing, San Francisco Night Ministry, and our monthly shelter feedings. What else can we do as a group, as a Church, to serve God?
- 3) Q What I have ask so far has been in the context of the Church. How do we serve God outside of this building, outside this Church? The answer to that is not so straight forward. You're not safe out in the real world like you are in this Church. Does that keep you from helping people that need help? Are you aware of the homeless people in our neighborhood? Do you ever give food to a person on the street, someone that is hungry Are we Good Samaritan? Are we keeping the earth and its inhabitants safe and sustainable?

**To Summarize**, these question DO have answers but they don't end with a period, this is a continuing process for us all. Every day I'm challenged to do right thing, to do live a healthy life, eat right, take my medication, to be part of the solution, and not part of the problem. For works for me is to do something new and something that challenges me.

One of my favorite inspirational lines from a speech by President Kennedy is ...”ask not what your country can do for you, but what can you do for you country. In other words: ask not what God can do for you, but what can you do for God ...do this not because it is easy, but because it is hard.

To serve God, to serve others, and to serve that which is greater that ourselves is part of the foundation of our faith. This is echoed in different words from different faith traditions. Today's reading from 1 Kings, is from the Old Testament. From the Gospel of Luke 10:27, The Parable of the Good Samaritan tells us to “Love God with all your heart and all your soul and to love your neighbor as yourself.” The Arabic word, “Islam” means “submit to the word of Allah (God),” and the name “Buddha” means “the awakened one.”

I am still recovering. I am still waking up. I am still seeking to understand how to serve God. And I am grateful to have a second chance! I'm not done yet, I still have work to do.

**In closing, I have a few words of gratitude**, thank you for all the support during our time of need, including rides to various doctors, plants, flowers, conversations, offers for any and all help to Judy and me. For all the emails, cards, phone calls, and hugs. That made me feel as rich and as honored and King Solomon. Love, live long and prosper.

And to God, Thank you for extending my time on this small planet. Let me how I can do to help you. I'm here for you.

God Bless everyone. Amen