



Sermons from
First Presbyterian Church
of Ann Arbor

“You Belong With Me”

“He is your praise” (Deut.10:21a)

The Rev. Jim Monnett

August 22, 2010

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Deuteronomy 10:1-5,10-21

A hit song from last summer:

**You're on the phone with your girlfriend, she's upset
She's going off about something that you said
'Cause she doesn't get your humor like I do**

**I'm in the room, it's a typical Tuesday night
I'm listening to the kind of music she doesn't like
And she'll never know your story like I do**

“She’ll never know your story like I do...”

Do you think God ever says something like this about us?

Pause

Maybe God said something like this when God was on Mt. Sinai talking with Moses after the Exodus of the Israelites freed from slavery, chased by Pharaoh’s chariots, through the parted Red Sea – fish and sealife towering above their heads as they moved through the dirt to freedom. God has freed the Israelites enslaved in Egypt.

God be praised!

Moses left the Israelites encamped below Mt.Sinai went up on the mountain to speak with God and receive the 10 Commandments – the framework for how a new society could be devised. A society – a community of faith – where love is center: where all people are valued including the poor, the alien, and the widows. This is the society envisioned by God and to be begun with the 10 Commandments supernaturally written on 2 stone tablets.

But...

While Moses was on the mountain for 40 days, another part of God – our God who is already everywhere – watched, internally, as fearful people like us turn our backs on God, and decide we need something else to trust in.

We decide we need someone else to give our trust. We NEED something different to give us happiness. Like a god we can see, let's make a Golden Calf. Or maybe we need the fantasy girlfriend...

**But she wears short skirts, I wear T-shirts
She's Cheer Captain and I'm on the bleachers
Dreaming about the day when you wake up and find
That what you're looking for has been here the whole time**

**If you could see that I'm the one who understands you
Been here all along, so why can't you see?
You, you belong with me, you belong with me**

While Moses is receiving the Ten Commandments – we are building ourselves a better god. Or a better life without God.

For we know what we want. A cottage on a lake. Check. 18 holes of par golf. Check. Our youth in every activity we can schedule them into. Check. A black Lexus SUV. Check. One more bathroom and a finished basement. Check. Browns/Lions tickets to Saturday's game. Check. Seeing every movie the day it opens. Check. Getting our son into the best school. Check. Getting our daughter onto the best travel sports team. Check.

Volunteering for one more committee, ministry, school activity, environmental, political, groups. Check.

This will make us happy...and worthy of praise.

God is on the mountain with Moses and God is here in the valley with us watching us turn away. Watching us turn away.

**Dreaming about the day when you wake up and find
That what you're looking for has been here the whole time**

**If you could see that I'm the one who understands you
Been here all along, so why can't you see?
You, you belong with me, you belong with me**

PAUSE

Five to six hundred years later, some faithful believers are writing down the history of our people. This story – theological retelling to an important story - is now called the Deuteronomic

History. It weaves its way through the Old Testament and has as its heart the book of Deuteronomy. Our reading picks up with Moses on the mountain a second time – 40 years after the first time.

It is 40 years since we chose to make our own God.

It is 10 minutes since we confessed our sins saying:

We pray that in this summer season, Your Holy Spirit will dwell in our hearts and fill our lives with love. Before you, O God, our lives are exposed and all our needs are known. Be at work in our lives to shape and mold us into the likeness of Your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Ten minutes ago we confessed our sins. And we have been forgiven. This we call the “Assurance of Pardon” or the promise and guarantee that our sins are now gone.

Forgiven.

So 40 years later and 10 minutes later we have a fresh start:

So I made the ark out of acacia wood and chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I went up on the mountain with the two tablets in my hands. ⁴ The LORD wrote on these tablets what he had written before, the Ten Commandments he had proclaimed to you on the mountain, out of the fire, on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me. ⁵ Then I came back down the mountain and put the tablets in the ark I had made, as the LORD commanded me, and they are there now.

Writing for Moses we learn that he made an ark later known as the Ark of the Covenant for the tablets would be inside, which is God’s promise to be our God.

And this is all God at work, because we keep turning away.

But God is gracious and good. He is our praise. **He is our praise.**

What are we looking for? Many, many things. But God is our praise. Everything we need.

You belong with me

PAUSE

Some scholars observe that one translation of our readings word “tablet” could better be translated “table.” In the first 5 verses the word is used 5 different times. They wonder...they wonder if God isn’t saying that the praise or peace of life we seek is found at God’s table.

In the pastor Bible study on Wednesday Sarah said that in her family they had dinner together every night no matter how good the discussion or harmony was the night before. And everyone who was at dinner the night before was welcome today. Family dinner wasn’t a privilege to be granted but an expectation of a family that loves each other.

The 10 Commandments are written on a table.

God is our praise. Our praise and peace. That which we are looking for isn't hiding from us. It is right here before us – the Lord's Table.

Jesus stands before us and says, "Welcome good and faithful servant."

We are welcome here. Not for anything we did or didn't do. We are welcome by pure grace. We are welcome because we belong.

God is all around us...

**Dreaming about the day when you wake up and find
That what you're looking for has been here the whole time**

**If you could see that I'm the one who understands you
Been here all along, so why can't you see?**

**You,
you belong with me, you belong with me**

Amen.

* Because sermons are meant to be preached and are therefore prepared with the emphasis on verbal presentation, the written accounts occasionally stray from proper grammar and punctuation.