

## **From Frying Pan to Fire**

Sermon notes for the sermon  
Given by Rev. Dr. Gregory B. Young  
On Sunday, September 18, 2011

This sermon could very well have been titled "Be Careful What You Wish For," or "The Grass Always Appears to Be Greener on the Other Side of the Fence." Have you ever wanted something so badly that it haunted you day and night? Perhaps it was a promotion at work or the hope of your dream job. Maybe it was being tops in your class at school or the desire to be admitted at a prestigious university or college. Maybe you dream of the riches of a CEO or the get rich quick pipe dream of a lottery. We all have dreams, desires and hopes. In fact, they are what keep us moving forward with our lives, driving us to achieve and improve with the hope of attaining our goal.

Most times we are blinded by our dreams, desires and hopes – as they say "love is blind." The end goal seems to possess us to the point that we often times fail to see the reality that surrounds our hopes and dreams. I remember a member of this congregation who following World War II emigrated to the U. S. from Britain. He started his career in the mail room of Johnson and Johnson and in his sixties retired from J & J as a vice-president: from the mail room to V.P. – quite amazing. The other thing to keep in mind was that as he progressed through the company and moved up the corporate ladder he took on greater and greater responsibility. The higher he climbed

the tougher the job became. Yes, he was rewarded with increasing salary but he also sacrificed much as he worked longer hours and made harder and harder decisions. I wonder how many times he thought to himself as he was burning the midnight oil, "I should have stayed in the mail room. I wouldn't be as wealthy but I sure would have had less stress and been able to spend more time with my family."

When he was there the mail room was probably a very busy place with lots of pressures of its own. He probably dreamed of getting out of the mail room and settling in to a nice desk job with more money. When the opportunity came and he took the step of faith toward his dream my friend didn't know it at the time but he jumped from the frying pan into the fire. Often times we focus on the promise of our dreams without stopping to count the cost – to ourselves and our families. Most times we see the prize without taking time to know the liabilities.

God sent Moses back to Egypt for two reasons. First, God had made a promise to Abraham that Sarah's and his descendents would become a great nation of God's people. Second, God had heard the cries of Abraham's children who were struggling as slaves in Egypt. God sent Moses to Egypt because Abraham's children cried out to be free. They never thought about the responsibilities and liabilities that came with that freedom; they just wanted to be free from the suffering of slavery.

Not one of us could argue against such a dream. Many in this land of ours longed to be set free and a civil war took place, in part, to free those who longed for freedom and justice. With freedom, however comes responsibility.

In our reading from Exodus this morning we hear the grumbling of those who had been set free. They wanted water, they wanted meat, and their bellies ached for bread. They were starving to death and dying from thirst. They complained to God's messengers and leaders, Moses and Aaron. "You should have left us in Egypt where we had food and water and shelter. Yes, the work was hard and the beatings at times were unbearable, but at least we were alive. You have brought us to the wilderness to die of thirst and hunger; thanks for nothing.

Often times when our prayers to God are answered life becomes more difficult. Many times we unwittingly jump from the frying pan to the fire. Look at the life of Jesus who followed God's way for his entire lifetime among us. The goal was a worthy one – salvation for all. It led, however, to torture, humiliation and excruciating death.

We are those who have accepted the call of Christ to follow. It is a worthy thing to do, to follow the one who is God in an effort to get closer to God. It comes, however, with a price tag. We may be the unpopular ones at school or the ones who are ridiculed at work. We may be the ones to place ourselves in harm's way in an effort to help a sister or brother. We may even find ourselves all alone with no friends and in a foreign land as we seek to follow the one who saved us. Being a

follower of Jesus many times means that we jump from the frying pan into the fire if we are to be faithful to our calling. It starts with our baptism and leads to the eternity of God – a worthy goal that comes with a price.