

# The Pillars of the Spiritual life

## Preaching Series

### Sermon #1 Draft 2

#### July 31, 2016

Now before we begin a few dis claimers.

This morning I am not going to entertain you  
There will be no funny stories and anecdotes.

I will not be quoting a lot of scripture.

And the Jesus count will be very low

Why? Because I had to strip this thing down  
in order to shoe horn it into a 15-20 sermon.

But if you all want me to go 45 minutes  
just raise your hand. I thought so

Today we begin our preaching series on

The 4 Pillars of the spiritual life:

Stability, Obedience, Conversion of Life and Hospitality

**One last disclaimer**, these are not my original ideas  
but rather these spiritual pillars are the vows which  
Benedictine monks and nuns have been living by  
for nearly 1500 years.

These pillars have stood the test of time

As keys to Christian spiritual maturity

SO lets jump right in; The first spiritual pillar is Stability  
**Stability** as St. Benedict used it

Comes from the Latin word "Stabilis"

Meaning: To rest on a solid foundation,  
fixed by strong and unshakable roots

Benedict interpreted this concept in his community as  
remaining steadfast and faithful  
in the situation in which God has placed you.

In essence to "stay put", trusting  
you are right where God wants you to be.

Which implies that God actually ordains where we are.

Unfortunately, we are quick to question this premise.

We question whether we are  
actually, where God wants us to be,

especially when the situation is painful or difficult.

I can't tell you how many people have come to me  
for counsel regarding living into the will of God.  
They whine "I am not sure I am where I am supposed to be,  
in this job, or relationship or marriage or town.  
Is this where God wants me to be? I want to do God's will,  
but I am not sure I am in the right place

Now I do not subscribe to this theology  
that God has a specific and precise thing  
for you to do and be  
and if you are not discerning exactly what it is **and doing it**  
then you are out of God's will. And better watch out.  
But if you can find out what God's specific will is  
for your life and do it.  
then you will be happy and fulfilled.

Such a theology can actually be de-stabilizing  
Because, it supposes that the life God wants us to live  
is somewhere out there and if we are faithful enough, spiritual enough,  
work hard enough we will find it and be  
rich, happy, safe, satisfied and fulfilled.

So let me ask you. Who in this room is  
Rich, happy, safe, satisfied and totally fulfilled  
Anyone? Raise you hand. Please, I want to meet you.

The truth is "Life is difficult", it is painful and scary,  
it is glorious and wonderful.  
It is frustrating and confusing. It is fun and challenging. But Fulfillment, is  
moving target  
and if we think it is some where out there  
waiting for us to attain  
Then we will constantly be shifting, changing, moving,  
restlessly striving trying to possess it. **And in the end**, Becoming  
frustrated that it always seems to  
slips through our fingers or when we seem **to arrive**  
it evaporates in an instant and we are left yearning, resentful  
and so we try harder to possess it,  
always pushing toward something out there  
This is modern life and it is the antithesis of Stability

I personally subscribe to a theology which was espoused  
nearly 1600 years ago by St. Augustine.  
"Love God and do what you will"

What Augustine was proposing was the idea of  
God's umbrella of Grace.  
Meaning underneath the umbrella of grace  
there is a myriad of choices and ways  
you can go and be, that are covered by God's grace  
So don't make it so hard, **Just Love God and do what you will**

I believe the question is not; "am I in the right place?"  
The question really is;  
"how can I be faithful and graceful right where I am?"  
even if it is difficult or unfulfilling.

Stability is not based upon our feelings  
or our fulfillment but rather  
our willingness to surrender to God's will. (Repeat)  
Stability is a commitment to a place and group of people  
in the belief that  
**this is the place and these are the people  
who will help me discover God.**

We embrace life as we find it,  
knowing that, this, the here and now  
is where we will experience God.

Now I know this is a difficult idea to entertain. Why?  
Because everything in our culture  
and in ourselves tells us the opposite  
that fulfillment, joy, excitement, peace, and even God  
are right around the corner,  
to be found in the next new thing, new book, new program,  
new spouse, new job, new car.  
The world actually calls us to instability  
and habitual restlessness. Forever, striving  
God calls us to stability and serenity  
in the here and now, in the present.

Stability is saying yes to God's will for me.  
in this place, at this time, with these people  
trusting all three, place, time and people  
will contribute to my spiritual maturity and theirs as well.  
Together, we grow into the full stature of Christ.  
And it is all happening, right here, right now.

If that is true and I believe it to be so  
then **the key to living in stability  
is learning to live in the present**  
Not lamenting the past, reliving over and over,

the situation or event which altered your life  
or pining for a golden age when all was right.  
nor is it striving for a new and exciting future because  
the present seems empty or intolerable.  
The core premise of stability is the art of being present  
It is accepting the idea that  
we are actually right where we are supposed to be right now, and if that is  
true then I need to **stop, and look around**,  
see, participate and fully engage, in the present,  
Because this is actually where life is taking place.  
In the present

Now to cultivate the art of living in the present  
We must be present, first with ourselves  
listening to our bodies, our spirits, our heart,  
it is about knowing what I am feeling, doing, thinking,  
knowing myself, my motivations,  
my virtues and character flaws alike  
resisting delusions and reactions  
In essence being grounded and present with myself.

Second we are called to be present with the other,  
to be dialed into the person who is right in front of me, to give them my  
undivided attention  
not to rush or be distracted  
but to be completely with them in the present,  
embracing the idea that this interaction  
is really all that exists right now  
and God has given me this person, in this moment. Trusting God that this  
is right where I am supposed to be  
and this person, is the person  
I am supposed to be with.

And it is being present with myself and the other,  
being complete dialed into the present  
and what is happening right in front of me  
that God reveals himself, and He is present with us.

Another way to think about it is; If this is all there is,  
That the past is gone never to return  
and the future has yet to arrive.  
Then this is actually "it", the present is all we have  
And the present is where life actually happens,  
the present is where we love, where we listen.  
The present is actually where God meets us.

As the Psalmist wrote in psalm 46  
"Be still, and know that I am God."  
Be still, be present, be stable and there  
you will see God, know him and experience him.

If that is true and I believe it to be so,  
then being present is one of our greatest spiritual works because it is only in  
the present that we  
we discover our true selves, are truly with the other and  
truly know and experience God.

This truth equips me to, **consciously choose to** stay put  
physically, emotionally and spiritually  
it calls me to stability, to live in the present, by being present  
with myself, the other and God.

The truth is I don't have to be looking for the greener grass  
because I am sitting on it.  
I don't have to strive for the spiritual promised land because  
I am actually living in it.

As St. Anselm 11<sup>th</sup> century monk, writer, and  
archbishop of Canterbury, wrote "to pursue the holy life,  
one must set down roots of love in one place" Stability

### **So how do we begin to practice stability and being present?**

I believe Community is the workshop of Stability.  
In true community we are known and we know others.  
Those who are unstable  
are those who are not, integrated parts of communities,  
they drift in and out,  
they dwell in the shadows and are not known.

Stability is an imperative ingredient  
in life giving relationships.  
Stability translates into reliability, trust, loyalty, safety.  
And is essential to intimate communities,  
like marriage, family and church

Community is the incubator for the cultivation of stability, **if**  
we are willing to be present and willing to be known.

But as you know relationships are the hardest thing we do.  
And often times when relationships become painful  
And situations become frustrating, our propensity is to

**Exit stage right** and start over some place else  
With somebody else.

But stability calls us to stay put, to seek God where we are  
Therefore, it seems to me that persistence  
Is an essential ingredient to a life of stability

When I counsel people in AA  
one of the things I tell them is find a home group.  
A place where you and everyone else shows up consistently  
Building trust, so that a safe place to be known, is created.

Consistency, persistence and perseverance  
are the key ingredients in cultivating stability,  
following trusting God, being present and open.

What we will find, when we keep showing up,  
staying put, and practicing living in the present  
is our true selves, and  
we learn to love and appreciate the other  
and some times both of these are painful experiences  
which will force us to change and be changed  
but if we persist and persevere  
we will see and experience God in the most profound and compelling ways.

Stability is the foundation upon which  
we are equipped and empowered to live obediently  
and With out stability, there is no true obedience  
and with out Stability and obedience  
there is no true conversion of life  
And with out conversion of life  
there is no authentic hospitality.

You see the spiritual pillars are sequential  
and build upon each other  
to draw us into deeper self awareness, community  
and the presence of God and it is there  
that we are changed, Transformed, to  
reflect his grace and love  
with truer clarity and power. Why?  
So we might truly live,  
genuinely love the other  
and in doing so,  
the world may come to know the glorious love of God  
In essence, “ to restoring all people to unity  
with God and each other in Christ.”

And let me remind you that is the purpose of the Church.

So next week we explore the spiritual pillar of Obedience.