

## October 2011 - From the Pastor

*"It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy."*

*Romans 9:16 NIV*

I heard it the other day, a parent was telling a child, "You just have to try harder." I was tempted to say something but decided against it. The parent was just telling the child what is a popular theme in our world -- if you just try harder you can: lose those extra pounds, get a better job, get into heaven. We equate lack of success with laziness, not being ambitious enough or not trying hard enough.

Now I am not against trying harder but... There are days when I try harder to be a better person, a better Christian, a better husband, etc. And, occasionally I am successful (at least for a while). But then old habits come back, I grow tired and well... I need to try harder again. Repeat the cycle. I told myself I was going to add to my blog weekly, two weeks ago -- now already one week behind. Have some good excuses -- lots of work and other things -- maybe I will try again, next week.

As I read Paul's passage in Romans I breathed a sigh of relief. This is not an excuse for not trying harder -- it's just an understanding, for me, that God is in all things. Maybe it was more important that I sat and listened to a person in distress rather than run off and write a couple of paragraphs for a blog. It made me ask the question, Was my thinking I needed to try harder my need, not God's? What would happen if I handed it over to God? Not the writing of the blog but my need to try harder.

Our world pushes us to try harder. If we attend more meetings, have more programs, change worship, sing different hymns, etc. Then the Church will grow -- we do and it doesn't. So, what do we do, we try harder. Hold more meetings, introduce more programs and... fail to let God lead. God does not need us to try harder, God needs us to follow where God leads. We just get trying so hard we fail to follow.

Where am I going with this? I am not sure -- I am caught in the tension of living in this world where I am bombarded with new programs, new ways to try harder. And, the world where I simply let God lead - and to know the difference.

If I try harder at anything it must be in my desire to be more like Christ. If the church is to grow it must become more like Christ. If we are to change the world... well, you get the picture.

Try harder, by all means - to follow Christ and rely on God's mercy.

*Pastor Dennis*

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### **Sermons for October**

October 1 - World Wide Communion Sunday

Isaiah 5:1-7; Matthew 21:33-46

*Parables of Unfaithfulness*

October 9

Exodus 32:1-14; Matthew 22:1-14

*God's Parties and Ours*

October 16

Exodus 33:12-23; Matthew 22:15-22

*What Belongs to God?*

October 23

Deut. 34:1-12; Matthew 22:34-46

*Greatness Squared*

October 30

*The Rev. Bill Clarke, Preaching*

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