

Menifee United Church of Christ

Established in 1962 by God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

SERMON FOR

February 1, 2015

“Nothing Can Hold You Back”



Reverend Bill Freeman: Senior Minister
Eckart Seeber: Music Minister
Marie Paulus-Nyquist: Children's Minister
Richard Goward: Lay Reader

Menifee United Church of Christ

Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 AM

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Live Life Fully Alive!

Psalm 111:1-4

Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. Full of honor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the LORD is gracious and merciful.

Mark 1:21-26

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!' And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

“Nothing Can Hold You Back”

A new golfer goes into a pro shop and looks around, frowning. Finally the pro asks what the golfer is looking for. The golfer says, “I can't find any green golf balls.” The pro looks all over the shop, and through all the catalogs, and finally calls the manufacturers and determines that sure enough, there are no green golf balls. As the golfer walks out the door in disgust, the pro asks, “Before you go, could you tell me why you want green golf balls?” The new golfer says, “Because green golf balls would be so much easier to find in sand traps!”

Nothing can hold you back. That's what I want to talk with you about today. Not having green golf balls can't hold you back. Nothing can hold you back. But is there something holding you

back? Is your age holding you back? Is your weight holding you back? Is your health holding you back? Is your past holding you back? Is your financial situation holding you back? Is your insecurity holding you back? Is your fear holding you back? Is your fear of failure holding you back? Is your fear of success holding you back? Nothing can hold you back.

Nick Vujicic is a Christian evangelist and motivational speaker. Nick Vujicic has spoken all over the world. Nick Vujicic was born in Australia, with no arms and no legs. Maybe you've seen him. If you haven't, you can go online and see him. You can see him jumping off a high dive into a swimming pool. You can see him playing golf. You can see him fishing. He speaks to children. He speaks to youth. He speaks to adults. Nick Vujicic inspires everyone who sees him. His message is a simple one. His message is a Christian one. His message is basically: All things are possible through Christ. In other words: Nothing can hold you back.

If you're alive, nothing can hold you back. If you can breathe, nothing can hold you back. If you can get from point A to point B, nothing can hold you back. If you have supportive loved ones, nothing can hold you back. If you have free will, nothing can hold you back. If you live in a free country, nothing can hold you back. If you have an imaginative mind, nothing can hold you back. If you have a creative spirit, nothing can hold you back. If you have a joyful soul, nothing can hold you back. If you have faith, nothing can hold you back. If you have hope, nothing can hold you back. If you have love, nothing can hold you back. (Say to those around you) Nothing can hold you back.

Jesus enters the synagogue. A man is in the synagogue with what the scriptures say is, "an unclean spirit." Today doctors would probably say he had some kind of mental condition. Or perhaps epilepsy. Or maybe Tourette Syndrome. Because he cried out, "Oh no! It's Jesus! I know you! You're the Son of

God! Are you going to kill us?" Then Jesus said, "Be silent and come out!" And the man went into convulsions. Then whatever was wrong with him, ended. Jesus demonstrated that nothing can hold you back. Not an unclean spirit. Not a mental condition. Not epilepsy. Not Tourette Syndrome.

"Be silent, and come out!" Jesus said it to the man with the unclean spirit. Imagine Jesus saying that to you today. The voice inside your head reminds you of an unhappy childhood. Jesus says to the voice, "Be silent, and come out!" The voice inside your head reminds you of a hyper-critical parent. Jesus says to the voice, "Be silent, and come out!" The voice inside your head reminds you of a bad relationship. Jesus says to the voice (say it with me), "Be silent, and come out!" The voice inside your head reminds you of the mistakes you've made in your life. Jesus says to the voice (say it with me), "Be silent, and come out!" The voice inside your head reminds you that you were once addicted to drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, food, or anything else, and hey, wouldn't you like to try that again? Jesus says to the voice (say it with me), "Be silent, and come out!" Be silent and come out!

All four Gospels have stories of Jesus giving sight to the blind. In Matthew, he cured the blind. In Mark, he told the blind Bartimaeus, "Go; your faith has made you well." In Luke, he told the blind beggar, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you." In John, he cured the blind man by putting mud on his eyes and told him to go wash it off; the man could then see. It was as if Jesus was saying to all those blind people: You think blindness can hold you back? Nope. You can still be the person that God created you to be. That person is inside of you. "Be silent and come out!" Even if Jesus didn't cure you of your blindness, you can still be the person that God created you to be. Look at Stevie Wonder. Blindness didn't hold him back from being the person that God created him to be. Look at Jose Feliciano. Blindness didn't hold him back from being the person that God created him to be. Look at Ray Charles. Blindness

didn't hold him back from being the person that God created him to be. Nothing can hold you back from being the person that God created you to be, the person that's inside of you. As Jesus says, "Be silent and come out!"

But what if you're spiritually blind? What if you pass the time being a spiritually dead person walking? What if you're spiritually numb, because you've suffered so much in the past and in the present? Seek out help. Seek out counseling. Seek out people who find joy in life. Seek out people who are grateful for life! Seek out people who Live Life Fully Alive! And to that voice inside your head, that voice that tries to convince you that you're spiritually dead, say to that voice, as Jesus would, "Be silent, and come out!" Nothing can hold you back.

"The Theory Of Everything" is a spectacular movie. It's the story of Stephen Hawking, the brilliant theoretical physicist, who was diagnosed in college with ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease. ALS robs people of their bodies, while leaving their minds intact. So it's kind of the opposite of Alzheimer's disease, which robs people of their minds, while leaving their bodies intact. Usually people with ALS die within two to five years. But Stephen Hawking has lived for 50 years with it. Why? I don't know. Maybe people with ALS are so devastated by losing their bodily function that they lose their will to live. I don't know. Maybe Stephen Hawking believes that the only purpose of the body is to carry the brain around in. So he doesn't need his body. He just needs his mind. And what an amazing mind it is. Maybe Stephen Hawking believes that nothing can hold you back. Not even ALS.

I had a friend who died of ALS. It was a painfully long process. But I don't believe that death was the end of my friend. I believe he still lives on, in the hearts of those of us who loved him. And I believe his spirit still lives on, somewhere over the rainbow. Nothing can hold you back. Not even death. Because I believe

when we die Jesus is there, welcoming us into heaven. Not saying, “Be silent and come out!” But saying, “Be joyful and come in!”

Let us pray...

God of Love,

Help us to realize that nothing can hold us back.

Help us to realize that you don't want anything to hold us back.

*And help us to realize that you want us to be
the person that you created us to be.*

Now and forevermore.

By the power of the Holy Spirit.

And in the name of Jesus.

Amen.



*Meniffee
United Church of Christ*



*Whoever you are,
Wherever you are on life's journey
You are welcome here!*

*Jesus didn't reject people
Neither do we*



THE GOLDEN RULE

*What is hateful to you
do not do to others.*
Judaism

*Do to others what you would
have them do to you.*
Christianity

*None of you believes until he wishes for his
brother what he wishes for himself.*
Islam

*Do not do to others
what would cause pain if done to you.*
Hinduism

*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself
would find hurtful.*
Buddism

*Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain,
and your neighbor's loss as your loss.*
Taoism

*Do not do to others
what you do not want them to do to you.*
Confucianism

*Treat other people
as you'd want to be treated in their situation.*
Humanism