

“Seeking the Sacred Unseen — Through Yielding”

Series: *Seeking the Sacred Unseen*

Scripture: Mark 8:34-37; Philippians 2:1-11

Rev. Mary Bowman

February 9, 2025



First Presbyterian
Church of Charlotte

This morning, we are looking at the idea of how seeking after the sacred involves our yielding.

We jump right in with our First Scripture reading which helps us understand why yielding is so important when we are seeking to be in relationship with God.

Jesus puts it plainly — “Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You’re not in the driver’s seat; I am.”

Jesus likely spoke these words tenderly and thoughtfully, but many of us will hear them as a challenge, as an affront.

Did you feel the tension when Jesus said, “Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You’re not in the driver’s seat; I am. Don’t run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I’ll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to saving yourself, your true self.”?

Was it a particular word that chafed or maybe a verse?

Jesus is not saying anything new.

From the beginning of the Bible until the end, God is offering to walk with us and be in relationship with us

Jesus is inviting us follow God’s will for our lives instead of our own will.

And yet this idea can chafe.

You see, we like doing things our way.

We don’t like being told what to do.

We don’t like back seat drivers.

We like to be in the driver’s seat.

So why would we like to hear that someone else wants to be behind the steering wheel?

As I was thinking of driving, I couldn’t help but think of the development of self-driving cars.

Many of us are fascinated by the idea of self-driving cars, but we can’t help ask questions.

One question is about whether self-driving cars can be trusted.

Another is — “why would we ever let the car drive by itself when human beings are supposed to drive?”

I wonder if God ponders a similar question — “why are human beings insisting on being in the driver’s seat when I am the one who is supposed to be driving?”

Perhaps the further development of self-driving cars will help us be more open to letting go.

It is a difference of opinion on wills, isn’t it?

Our will and God’s will.

So how did we get at such odds with God about whose will we want to follow?

One of the challenges of being human is that we live in a world that is broken, sin-filled, and unpredictable.

In response to the unpredictability, we do our best to control things around us.

But the reality is that there is not much that we can control.

We might think we control it. Or we might think that we can control parts of it.

But the reality is that we really don’t have control.

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There are too many things that we simply don't know . . . things about ourselves, things about each other, things about God, things about the future, things about the past and the list could go on.

We live in a world that is broken, sin-filled, and unpredictable.

It is helpful to have a guide when journeying through such a world.

Guides know things that we don't. Guides are there to assist us, not simply to insist on their own way.

Guides can be very helpful, but there is a catch . . . guides are only helpful if we follow them.

If the guide says, left - but we insist on going right - then we are following our will and not being open to a different way.

Guides are only helpful if we follow them AND we will only follow a guide if we trust them.

God is offering to help us navigate our broken world.

God is willing to lead us.

But we will only be willing to follow God if we trust God.

The psychologist David Benner put it this way: “Until we are convinced . . . that God wants our deepest happiness, . . . [we] will do everything we can to keep our hands on the control of our lives because [we] think [we] know better than God what we need for our fulfillment.”¹

I don't know about you but yielding — or letting go — is not always so easy.

If any of you have ever done a trust fall, then you know that it can be very hard to let go.

A trust fall is when we let go of what we are holding onto and trust that when we fall we will be caught.

Needless to say, it is impossible to do a trust fall without trust — this is, of course, why a trust fall is called a trust fall.

In our Scripture reading this morning, we listened to perhaps the greatest trust fall in history.

We listened to Paul's description of how Jesus let go of just about everything to follow God's will.

Jesus let go of heaven and all that it held.

Jesus let go of being powerful, of being relevant, of being special, of being successful in the eyes of others, of being well thought of, and of possessing wealth.

Jesus traded those things for the life that was intended for Him.

He yielded. He let go. He trusted.

It is important to note that Jesus never let go of His identity or His worth in God eyes.

And Jesus did not give up the ability to challenge God's will as we saw in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Questions are allowed.

Jesus let go in trust in order to partner with God in the human life He lived.

Jesus yielded to God's purposes and plan.

¹ David Benner, quoted in *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, 110.

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Yielding is not a word that I initially associated with seeking, and it was a conversation with a friend that brought yielding forward as a focus.

When I asked her about seeking, she said, “when I think about seeking, I think about yielding.”

She admitted that in most of her early dealings with God, she had sought for God with a plan, a list, a timeline.

She sought God’s divine stamp of approval of her life’s plan and sought God’s help in making her plan happen.

Over time, she came to realize that her plan and God’s plan were not always the same.

And over time, she realized that yielding to God was what she really sought. She sought the Good Shepherd when she passed through the valley of deep darkness.

According to the dictionary, to yield means to “give up a claim to something.”²

For my friend, her yielding was giving up her claim to have her way, her plan, her prayer request, her list, her timeline, her life, her will.

As I walked away from our conversation, I couldn’t help but think of the word “Amen.”

The word “Amen” simply means “let it be so” or “so be it.”

Our Amen is a word of letting go and of yielding.

The question is . . . is it possible for us to say “Amen” to God’s life for us?

²<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/yield>.