



PROGRAM TRANSCRIPT

Program #5309

First broadcast November 29, 2009

WELCOME

Lillian Daniel: Welcome to “30 Good Minutes!” We’re happy you’ve joined us as for this half-hour of reflection on faith. I’m Lillian Daniel.

Lydia Talbot: And I’m Lydia Talbot. Our guest today, whom you’ll meet in a moment, is Dr. Benjamin Reaves, Vice President of Mission and Ministries for the Adventist Health System in Orlando, Florida. He’ll be talking with us about trusting God in all things.

Lillian Daniel: We also welcome back Michael Siegel, Senior Rabbi of Anshe Emet Synagogue in Chicago. He has a few words for us about the nature of faith.

Lydia Talbot: We begin with the profile of a remarkable Chicago woman who, following in the footsteps of her parents, has worked decades towards a more justice society. Patricia Crowley is a Benedictine sister whose passion for peace, equality and the common good inspires many others to follow her example. Let’s watch.

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Patricia Crowley: I felt the call to become a member of the Benedictine Sisters when I was in high school and then I resisted that because I was enjoying dating and socializing. Then I went away to college for a year and then I made vows. So I made vows forty-nine years ago. Our charism statement is to seek God in community and to serve where there is need.

When I was growing up my parents had been very involved in social justice and so were the sisters. Social justice for me is seeing the uneven opportunities that people have in life and trying to look at policies to even out that accessibility. My family was progressive Roman Catholic. They were co-founders of the Christian Family movement. Then they began to take in foster children and then my mother founded Deborah’s Place. I worked at Deborah’s Place and prior to that at the Howard Area Community Center. So I worked in homelessness for almost thirty years.

I belong to the Ignition Spirituality Project, which is a program for women and men who are homeless to offer retreats. I organize the women’s team here in Chicago. The women who are homeless, they are deeply spiritual. We do one-day retreats here. We have 12 to 15 women. The women come and they’ll a little dubious about where they’re coming to and who these people are because they’ve never met us before. But it’s amazing. People just relax because they’re not used to being in a safe environment where they don’t have to worry about people acting on what they say. It’s really just to listen. And they discover companions on the journey. Most of them just

thrive on it and they're just beautiful. They share so deeply. They eat with the sisters in the monastery. Then we have some time, if the day is nice they can walk the labyrinth.

The labyrinth is an ancient tool for praying. It's a walking prayer. There is only one way you can go if you really follow the labyrinth and it leads to the center. So you pray as you walk. I've walked it with a group, which is really a powerful experience because everybody is walking the same path but at different speeds. It's just like we're all walking toward God. We're walking toward the center but we all do it in our own way. You get to the center and you pray. We feel lost sometimes in life, but if we know that the center is God then we keep walking and eventually we get there.

SPEAKER INTRODUCTION

Lillian Daniel: Our thanks to Sr. Patricia Crowley for sharing her spiritual journey. Now, let me tell you about today's speaker. Dr. Benjamin Reaves is an ordained minister in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and serves as Vice President of Mission and Ministries for the Adventist Health System. He's been a campus pastor, a professor of religion and a college president, but is best known by the "30 Good Minutes" audience for his popular annual appearances on this program, starting in 1989. We are delighted to welcome him back this year. Welcome, Ben.

MESSAGE

Benjamin Reaves: Thank you, Lillian.

It was what can only be described as a head-on collision. A collision with the familiar. The familiar contained in words in Matthew 6:34, known as the Sermon on the Mount. Words which not only provide the core and the distillation of Jesus' teaching to his followers, but also remind us of the substance and the aim of life. Words confronting us with choice and priorities: seek his kingdom, lay up treasure in heaven and not on earth and be free from anxiety.

Now my collision was with an aspect of the familiar that has not only challenged me, it disturbs me. The collision was with the phrase, "Take no thought for tomorrow." You see, frankly, it seems to go against the grain of the way I'm wired. It even cuts across my history. The truth is, in humility, I've prided myself on looking down the road, having a focus on the future. Over the years I've had an attachment with this because of the strong, overwhelming desire to always be on top of my game!

Also, when I encountered others who were not as I might be, focusing or thinking about the future, I figured they were just not on top of it or just didn't understand life with its twists and surprises. And so this collision forced me into a position where I needed to back up and reexamine what Jesus was saying and what he was not saying.

First, it comforts me to know when he says, "Take no thought for tomorrow," he is not advocating a shiftless, reckless, thoughtless attitude to life. Rather, he is forbidding a care-worn, worried fear, which takes the joy out of life.

But let's be honest. As human beings we are future-oriented people and we tend to worry about tomorrow. That's just the way it is. We may call it planning or anticipating. Or the Wayne

Gretzky syndrome: a good hockey player plays where the puck is. A great hockey player plays where the puck is *going* to be. The difficulty is, in life with that future focus, do we tend to imagine problems for tomorrow that never occur?

Speaking of tomorrow, when I was younger, I was eager to get there but didn't worry about it. So I was never present in the present. Always focused on tomorrow. Well, the older I get I'm not as eager to get there, and I do worry about it.

I guess I'm like the little girl I heard about who was thrilled when her dad took her to Disney World for the first time. She headed straight for Space Mountain. The dad worried that the roller coaster would be too scary for her, but she insisted. And to her delight, they rode it twice.

The next time they returned to the Magic Kingdom the daughter, now older, again dragged the dad to Space Mountain. As they stood in line, the dad could see her soberly studying the signs that warn about the ride's speed. "Dad," she said, "I don't think I want to go."

The dad then asked her why she would be nervous when she had enjoyed herself so much the last time. She replied, "This year, I can read."

Maybe that's the way with me. The older I get, the more and better I can read and the questions come. What will become of our health? Will we go blind or deaf or lose our memories? Who will take care of us? What about tomorrow? Will we have the strength to live tomorrow well, wisely and even joyfully?

The truth that I need to trust is the strength to live tomorrow will be given tomorrow, not today. But it will be given. My task today is not to have the strength needed for tomorrow's burdens. Our task today is to live by the mercies given for today, and to believe and trust that there will be new mercies for tomorrow.

You see, trust combines the realization of my need and a conviction of God's sufficiency. And that adds up to relying on the Lord to do it; confidently expecting that he will do it. Remember Proverbs 3:5. It says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." Trust cannot be tentative or cautious; it must be whole-hearted, it's an all or nothing principal. It means look for the answer in God's word, then, when we find it, we put our faith in it and our foot down on it.

One of my fondest memories is daddy leading out in family worship singing. He was not a singer, per se, but definitely a believer who sang his faith.

Much of my father's simple theology was contained in three songs that still play on the tape deck of my memory. When daddy would sing "Standing on the promises, standing on the promises of God," and that was coupled with, "I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord till I die," and then that was followed by "The Lord will make a way somehow." That captured it.

Whatever the situation, development, detour, turn, obstacle or challenge, the Lord will make a way somehow. Life was a matter of not only living in God's "somehow" but trusting in "God's somehow." Trust that is an affirmation of faith in God's capacity and commitment to handle tomorrow.

Now, where in Scripture do I get this confidence? Lamentations 3:22–23 reminds us: "The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness."

These are trying times and we all agree. No question about that. The question is, will trying times be trusting times? Trusting his presence, power, provision, protection, providence.

As the country poet wrote:

"One day at a time, sweet Jesus.
That's all I'm asking from you.
Just give me the strength
To do everyday what I have to do.
Yesterday's gone, sweet Jesus,
And tomorrow may never be mine.
Lord, help me today, show me the way
To trust you one day at a time."¹

Lord, we choose to seek you and we choose to trust you. Amen.

¹ Words by Marijohn Wilkin

CONVERSATION

Lydia Talbot: If you'd like a printed transcript, audio copy or DVD of the message you just heard from Benjamin Reaves, we'll tell you how to place an order at the end of the program. Or you can visit our website at 30goodminutes.org to watch the video or read the text anytime. Now, let's talk with Benjamin Reaves. Ben, congratulations first on this your 20th anniversary on "30 Good Minutes!"

Benjamin Reaves: How about that!

Lydia Talbot: It's a joy to see you again. You have given enormous comfort and encouragement to countless people who are very worried and fearful about their futures. Your message is one that certainly is a leap of faith. But let me ask you, finding strength to live tomorrow will not come today but will come tomorrow in the form of new mercies. Is that what grace is all about?

Benjamin Reaves: Absolutely. And grace continues. What's the song? "He giveth more grace and giveth and giveth and giveth." Yes, there is the continuation that will be there tomorrow. I can trust that.

Lillian Daniel: Have you ever met folks, though, who will sometimes kind of hide behind that “Oh, I’m just living in the moment today,” and they are sort of not taking responsibility, they’re not planning? Sometimes I teach preaching and the student will say, “Well, I didn’t prepare anything because I just wanted the Holy Spirit to visit me on Sunday.” And I think, the Holy Spirit has more time if you started on Monday. What do you say to people who maybe use that as an excuse?

Benjamin Reaves: Well, first of all, I say to what you said: Amen!

Lillian Daniel: Thanks.

Benjamin Reaves: When I taught homiletics, the same kinds of things would come up and I would also say, “Well, I do believe the Spirit can speak to you in your study and that might enhance what is happening or not happening when you get into the pulpit.” No, I don’t buy that. I don’t buy that. But it is a struggle sometimes and a cop out for people who want to say, well, I’m just going with the flow.

Lydia Talbot: Ben, you are speaking from your own personal experience with serious medical issues for the last several years. You’re wearing a bracelet, that you just described as a whole collection.

Benjamin Reaves: A laundry list!

Lydia Talbot: A laundry list of medical struggles that you are facing. How has your faith sustained you personally when you are so worried and so concerned about tomorrow and how much of that is a part of just growing older?

Benjamin Reaves: Well, I guess it’s part of growing older, but also it’s a part of living. And I have discovered that with the health challenges that come and that present themselves that it was easier for me to leave that in God’s hands. That was not a struggle for me. The struggle for me seems to come when it’s involving things that are part of “my gifts;” things that I can do, things that I do from day to day. The struggle there is, well, the Lord will handle tomorrow, he will give you how that’s going to work out instead of your having to try to not only plan for tomorrow and then try to sort through every possible scenario that might come up tomorrow. No, that won’t work.

Lydia Talbot: And you talk about stealing the joy when you’re wringing your hands all the time about tomorrow. That really happens, doesn’t it? You take the joy not only from yourself, but from others around you.

Benjamin Reaves: Absolutely.

Lillian Daniel: Yeah. You can often ruin a wonderful experience and not be able to be present to it because you’re so fixated on what’s going to happen later on.

Benjamin Reaves: Precisely. And the strange thing is, I used to pride myself on it.

Lillian Daniel: On being that person?

Benjamin Reaves: Yeah. Being out in front.

Lillian Daniel: May I ask you to look backwards for a minute? I'm curious to know, you've been on the show twenty years in a row. What are some differences in this show? What was the show like twenty years ago?

Benjamin Reaves: Well, when I look in the monitor or I look in on the net and see myself, I see one change that has occurred and that's aging!

Lillian Daniel: You're better looking!

Benjamin Reaves: Oh, I'll be back! I'll be back. But I think I've seen a growth of the program in trying to stay current and trying to meet the needs of listeners, trying to adapt to a broader audience. And I think a very good job has been done in doing that. Not just because I'm still here!

Lydia Talbot: I have to ask you about the music in your life and the hymns that your father sang to express his faith. "Standing on the Promises." Give us a little of that. What does it sound like?

Benjamin Reaves: Standing on the Promises? [Singing] "Standing on the promises of Christ my King, through eternal ages let his praises ring." That's all the breath that I have!

Lydia Talbot: I know when you've been in the hospital struggling the hymns have helped you through.

Benjamin Reaves: Oh, yeah. When I quote the words, "the Lord will make a way somehow," that's real to me. And it's in his "somehow" that I may not know everything about, but I can trust his promise that he'll make a way.

Lydia Talbot: How are you passing this down to your children and grandchildren?

Benjamin Reaves: Well, every once in a while grand dad and dad is known to reminisce and reflect and to get caught up in sharing the journey that he has traveled and the blessings he's received and the encouragement that God has given his heart.

Lillian Daniel: And do you encourage them to not plan ahead as much as you did or not worry as much?

Benjamin Reaves: Actually, I think they have looked at me and decided, you know, maybe that all of that "out ahead of the game" is not all it's cracked up to be!

Lydia Talbot: Ben, what's your next trip, what's your next speaking engagement? I'm going to ask you about tomorrow!

Benjamin Reaves: Well, I do have an engagement at Oakwood University where I spent a great deal of time.

Lydia Talbot: You remain vigorous. You keep on going.

Benjamin Reaves: I remain vigorous. I like to say “stay engaged.”

Lydia Talbot: Thank you for engaging us today, Ben Reaves.

REFLECTION INTRODUCTION

Lydia Talbot: We turn now to Michael Siegel, Senior Rabbi of Anshe Emet Synagogue in Chicago, who has a few words for us about faith.

REFLECTION

Michael Siegel: The story is told of a king who possessed a beautiful gem that he prized above all else. One day, to his horror, the king discovered a scratch on his beautiful stone. Immediately, he sent messengers to every corner of his kingdom offering a great reward to anyone who could remove the scratch. One by one, jewelers came to examine the stone only to tell the downcast king that nothing could be done. One day, an artisan came to the palace and heard of the king’s plight. Examining the stone, the artisan announced to a stunned court that he could repair the king’s gem. He took his tools and the gem into another room and emerged triumphantly with the gem in hand. When the king gazed at his beloved stone he was amazed to see that the scratch was still there, but that the artisan had etched a rose at its top, so the scratch had become the stem of a beautiful flower.

Friends, this is a parable that reflects the path of life. Each of us is entrusted with a beautiful life with many facets. Life’s challenges create scratches that appear on the beautiful surface of our gem of life. Faith is a constant reminder that there is a God who continues to walk with us, and a world that remains beautiful. Like the artisan, faith does not take the scratch away, but it gives us the rose to put atop the scratch.

CLOSING

Lydia Talbot: Thank you, Michael. And our thanks again to Benjamin Reaves, Pat Crowley and you for being with us today on “30 Good Minutes.” I’m Lydia Talbot.

Lillian Daniel: And I’m Lillian Daniel. Before we go, I encourage you to visit our website at 30GoodMinutes.org, where you’ll find an extensive collection of reflections and stories, on video and in print, to enrich your spiritual life. Now, from all of us at “30 Good Minutes,” may peace be with you in the week ahead.