

**BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI**  
**THE WORSHIP OF GOD • OCTOBER 21, 2018**  
**60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION MONTH**

**The Psalm Litany**  
Based on Psalm 104

We will bless the Lord at all times!  
**God's praise shall continually be in our mouths!**  
Our souls make their boast in God!  
**O magnify the Lord**  
**and let us exalt God's name together.**  
I sought the Lord and was answered;  
I was delivered from all my fears.  
**Look to the Spirit of Life and be radiant!**  
Let us pray:  
**We taste and see that you are good, our God.**  
**We seek you and lack no good thing. Amen.**

**The Scripture**  
Deuteronomy 34:1,4-5

*Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the LORD showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan... The LORD said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there." Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord's command.*

**The Message**  
***Not Quite There***  
**Jacob Thorne**

***Associate Minister at Broadway Christian Church ~ 2005 – 2011***

Well...it is good to be with you here this morning. The last time I preached from this pulpit, on a Sunday morning, I had two fewer kids and a lot less gray hair, but I just tell myself that both are a sign of maturity.

I want to reminisce for just a few minutes. You've heard the saying, "All I need to know I learned in kindergarten." I've altered that just a little, "All I need to know, I learned at Broadway Christian Church."

Broadway and the Broadway Spirit taught me what it means to do church and be church. Two memories stick in my mind. On the first Monday I came to work at Broadway, 13-years ago now, Kim Ryan sat me down and said to me, "This is an exceptional church. You have no idea how lucky you are to be here and work with someone like Rick Frost."

Looking back, she was exactly right. Broadway was and is an exceptional church. It's an honor to celebrate 60-years of ministry with you today.

Another memory: On the way to lunch that first day, a Monday routine the three of us continued for many years, Kim, albeit my own fault for saying a lane didn't end when it did, just about wiped out the three pastors in one fell swoop.

On a more serious note, Broadway taught me, and challenged me, to think about what it really means to live in a faith community with one another. Some of my favorite early memories of ministry at Broadway include recalling church camps, where volunteers would willingly take a week of vacation from work to be at camp. I remember backpacking trips with youth, where we would hike up into the mountains and spend time in the alpine meadows listening to the thunder and lightning crash on the summit, only to gaze at the bright, clear stars hours afterwards. Only now, as a parent, do I realize more fully how trusting those parents were to let Paulette, my wife, and me guide their youth on a backpacking adventure.

I also remember officiating funerals and services for many of your loved ones. I am grateful that each of you, the church, let a young pastor learn the ropes of ministry so graciously and freely. And of course, I also remember the time when Broadway was in a bit of a wilderness — travelling from one journey to the next while waiting for a new senior minister. Now, in the midst of a similar journey, I want to spend some time this morning thinking about leadership, our own lives, and how to navigate time spent in the wilderness.

Our Scripture for today is taken from the Book of Deuteronomy. The Book of Deuteronomy is a sermon — actually a series of sermons. It is the longest sermon in the Bible and maybe the longest sermon ever. Deuteronomy presents Moses, standing on the Plains of Moab with all of Israel assembled before him, preaching. It is his last sermon. When he completes it, he will leave his pulpit on the plains, climb a mountain, and die. The setting is stirring and emotion-packed. Moses had entered the biblical story of salvation as a little baby born in Egypt under a death threat. Now, 120-years

later, eyesight sharp as ever and walking with “a spring in his step,” he preaches this immense sermon and dies, still brimming with words and life.

When I read this passage and think about the life of Moses, all he went through, and how it all ended, I feel conflicted. I feel disappointed for Moses. He had led the people of Israel for **40-years**, through the wilderness. He had endured all sorts of challenges and tribulations. Now, when he has finally arrived, when they have finally arrived, God allows him to see the destination — the Promised Land — with his own eyes, but not step one small step into all that awaits. Why is this?

It's true, Moses had been leading the Israelites for 40-years. But 38-years earlier, there had been a pivotal turning point.

When Moses and the Israelites had been traveling for two years out of Egypt, they had actually arrived just several miles away from the Promised Land. So, Moses sent spies into the Promised Land to see what they could discover. The spies came back, and said, “It’s true...the land is flowing with milk and honey.” But, they said, “The people there look like giants and we, in comparisons, look like grasshoppers.”

At that moment, a key decision was made. The Israelites were convinced that God had led them out of Egypt and that God was with them in the wilderness, but their fear overtook them. The land of giants was just too paralyzing to move forth. So, for the next 38-years, the Israelites camped out in the wilderness, just miles from the Promised Land (they didn’t spend all that time wandering around). And Moses, all those years, kept pushing and pushing — reminding them that sometimes we make our fears seem so much larger than they really are.

When I read this passage, with Moses at the top of the mountain overlooking the Promised Land, I also remember the very last sermon Martin Luther King gave. In the very final sermon before he was killed, Martin Luther King recalled this same imagery and passage from the Bible. King said he had been to the mountain top, and that even if he did not step foot into the Promised Land with them, he too had seen the Promised Land.

Thought about in these terms, these two great leaders, both seeing but never reaching the Promised Land, remind me that this passage for today really isn’t a passage about disappointment. Rather, this passage is a passage about hope, leadership, vision, and the fulfillment of God’s kingdom.

I have come to see this passage, at least in part, as a story about how great leaders have the faith that they, or their people, might never fully arrive into the Promised Land of God. If we fully arrive, then we have set our vision and our dreams too small. If we fully arrive, then we’re not pushing, changing, or working for something greater than

ourselves. If we fully arrive, we are perhaps fulfilling our dreams and not God's dreams.

This idea of never quite arriving is one of the characteristics of the Broadway Spirit and something that distinguishes Broadway from other churches. Broadway, modeling biblical leadership, is never content and always growing new ministries and new missions.

But let's move from the broader picture and take it down to a more personal level.

What does it look like in our own personal journey to make it to the Promised Land? What are we really striving for in our lives?

Yesterday, I had the honor and privilege of officiating two funeral services at the church I serve in St. Louis. We had one service in the morning, followed by a lunch. And one service in the evening, followed a supper.

Both services were a combination of heartbreak and joy. The heartbreak was from the death. The joy was from the promise of God's eternal grace and love.

The first was a service for a young man, a 32-year-old named David, who had four children and terminal brain cancer. The second was for a 48-year-old woman, Kathy, seemingly just several years ago at the prime of her life, and now, her husband and daughters have buried their wife and mother.

As a pastor, I find moments of death and the rituals of funerals to be some of the most sacred moments of ministry. In times of darkness, people are seeking, intently, for the cracks of light breaking in. And when they do, I get to join in that process — guiding when possible, but mostly just accompanying on the journey. I also get, at times, to ask questions and listen to deeply-personal answers.

Yesterday morning, before David's service, I recalled our final conversation with one another. David's mom had asked me to come to the house and visit with him a week or two before he died.

So, one Sunday evening, I made the trip. David, now living with his mother in order to have full-time care, was sitting on the couch in their new house. (The old house, just down the hill, had been flooded twice in the last two years. The church helped rebuild the first time, but the second time, they were forced to move).

We moved from the couch, out to the front porch. His mom found something to do in the house; she knew it would be too hard to participate in the conversation. With his

stepdad, Kevin, sitting next to David and me, and the warm sun baking the boards of the porch, I asked, “David, are you scared?”

“I was”, he said. “But I’ve moved past that now.”

We then talked about David’s understanding of God and the universe. He shared with me his belief that we are all moving towards something that has been made by the great Creator of all. And now, 24-hours after his funeral, here with you on this beautiful Sunday morning, celebrating 60-years of ministry, reflecting on life and leadership, and knowing that David has now reached the Promised Land of God, I wonder: Are we not all called to do the same as David? And are such understandings also part of our text this morning?

Great leaders can take you far — you can catch glimpses of the Promised Land, even sneak into it a time or two and report back on what you see. But to really get there yourself, you must move past your own fear — something only you can do for you.

So, if life finds you now in a place of fear or worry, uncertainty or unknowing, know that God is with you, waiting, and watching as you prepare to address whatever is holding you back and move forth to whatever is next. The Promised Land waits for us all.

Now, I want to end with the same phrase I use at the end of every single sermon, the phrase taught to me by Rick Frost, “Through Christ, we say together, ‘Amen.’”