

“Don’t run yellow lights” A sermon by Lee Ireland
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church
November 18, 2018, Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost
Mark 13:1-8

Let us pray together: Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.

I stop for yellow lights when I drive. Do you? When you come to an intersection and the light turns from green to yellow, do you increase your speed to get through before the light turns red? Or do you slow down and stop. I’ve often slowed down to stop only to have the car come around me on a four-lane road and speed up to get through the intersection – usually just as the light turns red. Such behavior is dangerous!

Now you are probably wondering where I’m going with this talk about stopping for yellow lights. I believe that there are many Christ-followers in this world today who are not stopping at yellow lights. Some are even running red lights. I’m not talking about driving cars and running traffic lights. That may literally be true, but that’s not my focus today. I’m using traffic lights as a metaphor that we may use to think about Christ-followers who are being led astray in our current social climate. Jesus says, **Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray.**

Last week I asked you to listen to both sides of current issues – ones that are polarizing our county. I asked you to listen to those that think differently from you. This week, I’m asking you to weigh what you learned as you listened and the conclusions you reached – to weigh those conclusions against living the way that Jesus tells us to live. Which can be summarized in that commandment I talk about all the time. The shortened version: Love God and love your neighbor. The long version: **He (Jesus) said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”** (Matthew 22: 37-40)

Our society is polarized. Florida is a good example. You’re probably aware through the news media of the claims and counter claims about the legality of the Florida mid-term election results. In this polarized society, many people are looking for a messiah, a savior – and it’s not Jesus. They believe that if everyone would just see things their way the country’s problems would be solved, and everything would be just fine. They believe the society that would be created will save the world. They are putting their faith and trust in a political system or a person to save them.

Some who call themselves Christians don’t seem to be looking to Jesus to save them. They are not trusting in the God of heaven and earth. They are taking things into their own hands. They are bowing to leaders who are leading them astray. They are

barreling through that yellow light, ignoring the things they have been taught and know about being a Christ-follower.

What is driving this polarization? I believe that fear is the main emotion that is causing the divisions in our society. People are afraid of so many things, losing jobs, immigrants and others who are different from themselves, just to name two. Some fear the Democrats will turn the USA into a socialist country or if the Republicans stay in power, the rich will get richer and the poor poorer.

Walter Brueggemann, a contemporary theologian, says about fear and the Christian: "When we live according to our fears and our hates, our lives become small and defensive, lacking the deep, joyous generosity of God . . . life with God is much, much larger, shattering our little categories of control, permitting us to say that God's purposes led us well beyond ourselves to live and to forgive."

I believe that too many Christians have forgotten God's generosity and love for the world. In Isaiah, God said: **do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; will strengthen you, I will help you** (Isiah 41: 10). Moses echoes this same thought when he tells Joshua in Deuteronomy (31:8): "**It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.**"

Somehow, some Christian have forgotten God's teachings about fear. When they start to fear, they don't see a yellow caution light. They don't stop and consider. They run through the yellow and adopt a spirit of fear. And that Spirit is not from God. That spirit leads them astray into behaviors that are not God-centered, Christ-centered. In short, they forget to love God and neighbor.

I'm not pointing fingers today, I'm simply pointing out something I see in our society. What am I asking you to do? Heed Jesus' warning to beware of those who will try to take your focus off serving God. Examine your life to make sure there are not 'things' that are taking your focus off serving God and neighbor.

If you see a yellow light in your life, stop. Examine the issue and then, if you get the green light from God, proceed.