

[PSALM 46](#)  
[MATTHEW 11:28-30](#)

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### OUT ON THIS WIRE

As I was leading our Confirmation Class RETREAT several weekends ago, it suddenly DAWNED on me that THIS was my 27<sup>th</sup> YEAR of teaching Confirmation Class. WOAH! I mean: I still think of myself as a YOUNG minister, right out of seminary.... (*WHY are you LAUGHING?*) It's true: I DO think of myself as a YOUNG minister, even though I've NOW been in ministry LONGER than I lived before I BECAME a minister. WOW! That's just AMAZING to me. And IF I RETIRE at age 65, that means I've ONLY got 12 years LEFT! WHAT a SOBERING thought!

Anyway, AS I thought about that, I began thinking about the DIFFERENCES between the KIDS whom I had in Confirmation Class early ON in my ministry, and the KIDS whom I have in Confirmation Class TODAY, who would be the age of the CHILDREN of my EARLY Confirmands. And the BEST way to describe the most IMPORTANT difference that I see between them is to tell you a true STORY from a newspaper in Tacoma, Washington. It happened several years ago. It's the story of *TATTOO*, a BASSETT hound. Now, Tattoo didn't INTEND to go for an evening RUN, but when his owner SHUT his LEASH in the car door by mistake, and took OFF, with Tattoo STILL outside the vehicle, Tattoo had NO CHOICE but to RUN like crazy. Well, a motorcycle officer named Terry FILBERT noticed a passing VEHICLE that appeared to be DRAGGING something. And AS the vehicle passed, Terry REALIZED that it was a BASSETT hound on a LEASH. Well, Terry CHASED the car to a STOP, and RESCUED poor Tattoo, but NOT before the dog had reached speeds of 20 to 25 miles per hour, and rolled OVER several times. But TATTOO was OK! And as Terry Filbert later commented: *That poor dog was picking them up and putting them down just as FAST as he could.*

Well friends, THAT'S the PRIMARY difference that I see between the kids of 20 to 27 YEARS ago and the kids of TODAY. This CULTURE of ours has gotten SO fast-paced, and is REARING us (and especially our children) with SUCH a NEED for CONSTANT stimulation, that ALL of us, and PARTICULARLY the YOUNG, are living with MAJOR stress in their lives. It's like our CULTURE is that CAR and the KIDS (and ALL of us in some ways) are like poor TATTOO, being DRAGGED along behind. And while we ADULTS can make some CHOICES about that, too often our KIDS are just trying to meet everybody ELSE'S expectations of them. And consequently, they end up FEELING as if they're walking a TIGHTROPE, and trying to keep everything in BALANCE.

Well, I have a SONG about that I'd like to PLAY for you. It's by a truly YOUNG minister in our *United Church of Christ*. His name is Christopher Grundy. And I met him recently when I went to CHICAGO for the Senior Minister Conference. The song is called *OUT on This WIRE*. Listen:

#### Song: Out on the Wire by Christopher Grundy

And isn't it the TRUTH? It's like WE, and ESPECIALLY our YOUNG, are walking *OUT on the WIRE*, trying to KEEP our BALANCE. And AS we DO, it's like we're juggling KNIVES and FIRE. It's like we're juggling DANGEROUS things, which for the KIDS are DESIGNER drugs; pretty much free-flowing ALCOHOL, even from some PARENTS; an increase in VIOLENT behavior, even in school; lots and lots of PEER PRESSURE to do lots and lots of unhealthy things; absolutely RAMPANT sexual innuendos, sexual harassment, sexual violence and date rape; AND a cultural expectation for EVERYBODY to look like an *Abercrombie and Fitch* MODEL. And ALL these stresses and temptations are HEIGHTENED even MORE because of the state of our NATION and WORLD right now, because THIS is a VERY scary TIME in which to LIVE, let alone in which to GROW UP. Yes, the STRESS on our kids these days is just INCREDIBLE. And they SO want to do

WELL, and DO what's RIGHT, and have a good, solid FUTURE ahead of them... at least the kids HERE do.

And THAT'S why I've tried VERY hard this year to SHOW our young people that they are SPECIAL, that they are LOVED, and that they are VALUABLE just as they are. I've tried to teach them to CLAIM their *belovedness*, to claim the FACT that THEY are the *beloved* SONS and DAUGHTERS of God, who have been BLESSED with MANY talents, gifts and blessings. And THEREFORE, they OUGHT to be able to BE themselves, and to LIVE by GOOD values, rather than falling PREY to PRESSURE from their peers. AND I've tried to teach them G-A-R-O, which is MY shorthand way of sharing with them an ATTITUDE, an attitude of love and acceptance with which they can view THEMSELVES, AND, ALL those they MEET on their life journey. AND, I've tried to offer them some TOOLS this year that they can USE in order to DE-STRESS themselves, in order to RE-FOCUS their lives, and in order to RE-PRIORITIZE their day-to-day living. I've tried to teach them the ART of MEDITATION, contemplation and PRAYER.

And THAT'S because I believe, as the PSALMIST says, that GOD is our refuge and strength, that GOD is the One who is REALLY in charge here, and that GOD is CONSTANTLY at WORK in the MIDST of our various stresses -- and in MIDST of all THIS world's TOTTERING kingdoms -- that God CONSTANTLY at WORK creating and re-creating the kingdom that GOD desires for this world, which is a kingdom of PEACE, LOVE and HARMONY. And if GOD is the One who is in CONTROL, then WE need to be CONNECTING ourselves with GOD. WE need, as the Psalmist says, to take TIME to BE STILL and KNOW that GOD is God. And in the PROCESS, we will realize that God is WITH us. Yes, WE need to be focusing our hearts and minds on the One who INVITES us: *Come to me, ALL you that are weary, and that are carrying heavy BURDENS*, TRUSTING that WHEN we get OUT there, on that WIRE, GOD is the One who will help us CHOOSE what to LIVE for, so that WE will FIND that our LIVES STILL belong to US, and that WE belong to GOD, just like the chorus of the song SAYS.

And THAT'S the PRAYER that WE need to be lifting up EVERY single DAY -- EVERY single ONE of us: *Holy One, hold my HAND as I walk out on this WIRE, trying to balance while juggling the KNIVES and the FIRE. Help me to CHOOSE what I'm gonna LIVE for, so I will find my life's still MINE, and I am YOURS.* You know: it doesn't TAKE very LONG to pray that prayer. But I promise you that, IF you DO and do it regularly, at least DAILY, it WILL help you DE-STRESS, because it will FORCE you, day after day, (if ONLY for a MOMENT) to BE STILL and KNOW that GOD is GOD. And WHEN we REMEMBER this all-important biblical TRUTH -- that GOD is GOD -- LIFE becomes a little bit EASIER for us, because it helps us keep our PRIORITIES straight, and our VALUES intact.

There's a WONDERFUL clip from the *Ruby Bridges*, which SHOWS what I'm talking about today. Let's WATCH it.

**Video Clip: *Ruby Bridges*** (Measured from the beginning of the opening credit, BEGIN at 01:11:53 & END at 01:16:18.)

Friends, let's PRAY the song's prayer together. It's printed in your BULLETIN.

*Holy One, hold my hand as I walk out on this wire trying to balance while juggling the knives and the fire. Help me to CHOOSE what I'm gonna LIVE for, so that I will FIND my life's still MINE, and I am YOURS. Amen.*