

Closing The Deal

The Ascension Sunday sermon presented by The Rev. Philip A. Rodgers presented May 28th, 2017, at Trinity United Church in Malton, related John 17:1-11

We had our Trunk Sale yesterday here at the Church so anyone who has tried to sell something knows how important "Closing The Deal" is. But you know what the most awkward and difficult question that people who sell for a living are afraid to ask a potential customer is: whether the client is going to buy? Some salespeople shilly-shally about this, hoping that the customer will volunteer something like, "Here's my money; give me the product!" (Which almost never happens.) The reason they are shy is simple: they're secretly worried the answer will be "no", and that all their hard work developing the opportunity will turn out to be wasted.

Because closing is so important, sales people should know the five classic closers and when to use them. I picked the following up from a leading business journal that is like The Bible to my son who is a National Marketing Manager for a publishing firm in Toronto. Here they are:

1. *The Assumptive Close:* You ask a question: Are you going to buy? The answer is crucial. "No" means "we are both wasting time". "Yes and maybe" means "let's talk". "O.K.," you say, "then help me understand your process and how you will make up your mind and how can I help you."
2. *The Reverse Close:* You ask a question that elicits a no response but which is actually a yes to the close. "Is there any reason, if we gave you the product at this price, that you wouldn't do business with our company?"
3. *The Time-Sensitive Close:* You attach the purchase to a time line that the customer has already communicated. "You said you want to get this done by (a certain time); let's look at our calendars and figure out what we need to do today."
4. *The Direct-Question Close:* You summarize the conversation and simply ask for the business. "It looks like we've answered all the questions. Shall we move forward with this?"
5. *The Direct-Statement Close:* You communicate your confidence that the purchase is going to happen by simply stating "let's move forward on this." By positioning the purchase as an agreement between equals, rather than a supplication from the seller to the buyer. Nice and neat, right? So much for "Closing The Deal".

Today we read of Jesus getting ready to the "Close The Deal" he made with God: "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work which you gave me to do; and now, Father, you glorify me in your own presence with the glory which I had with you before the world was made."

Every word of our text is carefully crafted to register with the one whom he calls "Father" that he has closed his end the deal, he has done what he was asked to do. In other words "I did, as instructed, and let's move forward on this!". And The Church was born - with its own agenda – to bring together all the peoples of the world into one unified reality "Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me...that they may be one, even as we are one (John 17:10-11). That's The Deal. That's what we are all about here: to provide care for all members of a global community. But before we can grow our Community we have our own need to "Close The Deal".

Here is a clue why Christianity grew to become a dynamic, all inclusive and global movement. Its rationale was very simply to offer holy hospitality. Try it out. Live it. Love one another. Of course, to grow the church had to emerge and have some structure, but that structure was not for the sake of itself. It was so the mission could continue. So the church had institutional form, but those forms were dynamic.

The ultimate goal is *holy hospitality*. It is in the character of God who seeks us and needs us. God has assigned us the care of the world and all who inhabit it. We are to model ourselves around this dynamic love that is fresh in every generation. The lure of God is directed to the dream of God where all will enjoy holy hospitality and not uniformity nor one size fits all. We live in a pluralistic world so our speech and witness - our testimony must be multilingual. We must address the issues of the world in language everyone understands. This, though, is not to give up what understand our core values to be. In fact our core value is one of *holy hospitality*.

This is the power of a church that lives out of the idea of *holy hospitality*. This is the understanding that this earth is sacred space and needs careful attention, that each generation is sacred space and needs nurture. This is to understand that the power of love is the power of persuasion not force. Testimony is welcoming and alluring, not demanding and dogmatic. It is to say "how about trying this for a change and see if it does not enhance our life together. Holy hospitality is be the place where all grow in wisdom and strength where the blind see and the lame walk - this is meaning of unity - to be the church of welcome to the variety of colours around us - to be a rainbow in a world that seek a one colour experience. In this way our testimony is a living organism for the greater common good.

So it is with the church today. Like the community of John, we are yet a church torn by many factions... and though some have left previous denominational expressions due to schisms, we are yet called to evangelical mission. Though some push an agenda which may not be pleasing to our Lord, as expressed by right interpretation of scripture... we who are scattered still take heart. Our Lord prayed for us to the Father. And through the power of the Holy Spirit we are called by this lesson to see that we shall indeed be one, as our Lord Jesus and the Father are one. This is the challenge, to offer holy hospitality to all, "The Deal" that was laid at the foot of the Church. This is Resurrection faith given by the Holy Spirit...for Jesus Christ who was dead yet lives. It is the task given to the church to "Close The Deal". So it is written... and so it shall be.