**My Defenses Are Down!**

One of the first musicals that Melissa and I saw in New York was Annie Get Your Gun, with music and lyrics by Irving Berlin. The heroine is Annie Oakley, a frontier woman who could shoot a gun better than most men around. The hero is Frank Butler, the star performer in a wild west show because of his ability to shoot a gun. You can guess where this goes, Annie joins the wild west show, outshoots Frank, bruising his ego, but then eventually Frank falls in love with Annie. This is a musical, so of course there is a song where he reveals this; it is called “My Defenses Are Down”. The first part of the song, he sings “My defenses are down, She's broken my resistance And I don't know where I am.” And “She's got me where she wants me, And I can't escape no how”. He goes on to further describe his predicament as “Like a toothless, clawless tiger, Like an organ grinder's bear, Like a knight without his armor, Like Samson without his hair”. Then we go to the end of the song where he sings “But I must confess that I like it, So there's nothing to be done, and then Frank finishes “Being mis'rable Is gonna be fun”.

Now I will admit after my first date with Melissa, which lasted three hours and involved a lot of walking and talking, I was pretty hooked; to the point where I put my dating service membership on hold (meaning that I did not want any further new introductions at that point). I did, however, spare her my singing. And the rest as they say is history. And while I will say that she has dropped my defenses on a few things: Cooking recipes with more than two ingredients that I did not know - being one; My lack of interest in growing facial hair - being another; Overall, we have kept most of the individual traits that we brought to our relationship, wanting to improve on the traits of the other, not change them. OK, maybe one or two.

I am also going to guess that there are others in this room who might have this feeling of their defenses being down when they are interacting with their child or grandchild; they’ve been really good, and there is something that they want, and you stand there defenseless to their pleading, tugging on your arm, putting on their really cute face, and then you finally succumb. By the way, wives do that too

Looking at the reading from Colossians, Paul really wants them to give up a lot of their defenses, saying you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Now while I would not say that getting rid of these things is a bad idea, I do look at them as defenses; defenses against the world, or other people in it, because they are doing things which we find offensive, and so we lash out to protect (defend) ourselves. And as hard as those are to stop, in the next line Paul says Do not lie to one another; I think that this is even harder as I find that lying to someone is generally to either spare their feelings, or to avoid an argument. I guess the best that I could say to Paul is, ‘I will try but I am only human”.

I will admit that I have another relationship where my defenses are down, that being my relationship with God. If my defenses were not down, how could I expect to hear what God is saying? I must listen and hear his word and teachings (without filters or preconceptions), then seek to understand them. My defenses need to be of him, not against him.

In listening to the passage from Luke, I could not help but be taken back to the book of Genesis and the story of Joseph, again where there was an abundant harvest, this time in Egypt. Sparing the details, Joseph ends up in Egypt as his brothers in Israel had sold him as a slave. Through a series of events, he comes to be an aide to Pharoah and, in a dream, sees that there will be 7 plentiful years of crops followed by 7 years of famine. He tells Pharoah who believes the prophecy and agrees that they need to build bigger barns to store greater quantities of food than had previously been done. Now I can think that there was likely some resistance from the people of Egypt, complaining that their taxes were being raised to pay for new barns, and the amount of food they were receiving from the harvest was less. As the story goes, the 7 years of famine did occur, but as a result of the rationing of food the people of Egypt had food to survive those years. Probably complained less about the new barns at that point too.

As for the rich man in Luke, he built bigger barns to store all of his abundance, however, it was so he could hoard all of his crops and then be lazy. It does not state whether he was a faithful man or whether he thanked God for the harvest, but even if he had, he definitely did not get the message. And so at the end of the passage God said to him, `You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

We can all admit that it is difficult to not focus on accumulating “things” given how our society looks at those who have lots of things (money, house, car, toys). Later in Chapter 12 in Luke, God, however, does give us some instruction as to how to view our wealth, in the 48th verse - For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom much was committed, more will be asked of him. I am sure that we have all heard variations on this, the passage that I read was from the King James Version; as I really liked the use of the word “whomsoever”, preferring its random nature as opposed to using “whom”. So God, through Luke, is acknowledging that we could be that person who is given much, but we had better be sure and remember from whom it came, and seek to understand how he would have us use those gifts. My own take: Don’t feel guilty, but don’t feel greedy either!

So going back to where we started, I want to close using one more song, this one entitled “I Got The Sun in the Morning.” Which is sung by Annie, and in one verse she says, “Got no silver, got no gold, What you've got can't be bought or sold. I've got the sun in the morning, And the moon at night.” The sun in the morning and the moon at night. Sure sounds like God watching over us to me.

Thanks be to God. Amen.