

“Cloud Computing”  
ALL SAINTS’ DAY, *Communion*, Stewardship-theme (Live Courageously)  
By Rev. James C. Ramsey

Texts: Psalm 34:1-10  
Hebrews 12:1-3, 12-15

Preached: 11/4/18

Cloud computing, often referred to as simply “the cloud,” is the delivery of on-demand computing resources — everything from applications to data centers — over the internet to offer faster innovation, flexible resources, and economies of scale.

Many of you likely have much of your data stored on the cloud – your music, your photos, your documents, your apps. If I lose or break my i-phone, I simply need to log into my i-cloud account and I will have access to all my information, conveniently stored on the cloud.

You don’t have to be a technological whiz to understand the sermon today. In fact, it might be easier if you clear your mind of technological gadgets and gizmos for a few brief moments. The kind of cloud computing I want to talk about is theological, not technological!

So put your phones and your notebooks, your fitbits and your Apple watches aside for now. Let’s clear our palettes with a much more basic idea of cloud-computing!

[show IMAGE of Weather Math] I’ll give you a second to do the math!

.....The LORD set his bow in the clouds! Do you remember the story in Genesis? After Noah had sailed on the ark, and it rained for 40 days and 40 nights, then the waters receded and the flood subsided. God made a covenant with Noah and his sons. And God said, this is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth...

Every cloud is the potential backdrop for a rainbow!

I want to talk about what we might call cloud computing – a way of living courageously for God and with God, confident that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. I’ve been inspired by Giving Magazine – a stewardship resource for churches. And so, beginning today and continuing the next two Sundays I want to explore what it means to Live Courageously – to, as the Letter of Timothy puts it, “take hold of the life that really is life!”

The psalmist understands that life comes from God, and so assumes a posture of praise and worship. The psalmist knows it is the LORD who delivers, the LORD who hears when we cry out, the LORD who saves. “O taste and see that the LORD is good!”

The psalmist can be generous and giving because those who fear God have no want...those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. This is the original cloud computing.

A wise mentor once told me you cannot out-give God.

We have all sorts of excuses for not giving...or for not giving very much. Sometimes we are paralyzed by our worldly, practical reasoning. We need to be reminded of cloud computing – or as the Letter to the Hebrews puts it, we need to look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross...

We are surrounded by those who can teach us, inspire us, encourage us – a great cloud of witnesses, so let us lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely...

Writer Niel Lorenz of Dayton, Ohio tells how her friend, a young wife and mother of three, chose to spend the last year of her life while afflicted with cancer. "Linda made it clear from the beginning that cancer was inconvenient, annoying and unwelcome, but that it would not rule her life.

Accordingly, she and her whole family continued to take scuba lessons at a local pool to prepare for a big family vacation in the Cayman Islands. Linda was determined not just to go, but to participate in the family holiday. So adamant was she about this that when her blood count proved dismal the day before the intended trip, she simply checked herself into the hospital overnight, and received the medication she needed through an all-night I.V. connection.

Once in the islands, she rested and watched her family go out for their daily excursions to the reef. But she wanted to go diving with them, be a participant, not just an observer. In response to her incredible determination and positive spirit, a group of local diving instructors devised a way that she could join her family.

Because her spine was too brittle and ulcerated to bear the weight of the tank, they fitted her with a mask and mouthpiece and, as she breathed in it, they weighted her just enough to put her under the water. Then they floated an oxygen tank on a piece of foam above her and carefully added weights until Linda, the divers, and the tank slipped slowly beneath the surface.

For nearly an hour the entire family was able to explore the wonders of the island reefs.

Later, when Linda's husband Steve tried to pay for all the extra time and effort the dive team had gone to, he was turned down with these words:

We dive here everyday. We have seen that reef literally hundreds of times. We know every rock, every piece of coral and practically every fish on it. Today, however, we saw it through the eyes of someone with such courage, such spirit and such a zest for living that we looked at it in a different way. It is we who thank you and your family for the day. It is we who can never repay you. When our eyes are opened to the life that really is life, we cannot help but be generous.

Cloud computing – living courageously for and with God means investing our whole selves in this life that God has gifted us. You got a story about scuba diving, now a story about potato farming!

The Quaker spiritual writer, Douglas Van Steere tells of a potato farmer he once knew in Michigan. The man was frugal to a fault. He was so tight that he planted only the peelings of his potatoes as seed.

He fed the insides to his livestock...His method worked fine in years when there was plenty of moisture. But when the rains failed, he nearly always lost his crop. In years of drought, only the farmers who planted whole potatoes enjoyed a harvest.

Van Steere teaches that, in our spiritual lives, it's only when we plant the whole of ourselves, not just life's "peelings," that we reap a bountiful harvest. He quotes a line from the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno: "Sow yourselves, sow the living part of yourselves, in the furrows of life."

I invite you this day and in the coming weeks, to access the power of the cloud. Try your hand at cloud computing. Live courageously, confident that you are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses – that God is on your side and will out-give your most extravagant generosity.

When we, together, pool our resources, our time, our talents, our treasures, and put them at God's service, then we see the true power of cloud computing.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.