

St. Mary's Episcopal Church
Bridgeville, Delaware
"The Little Church with a Big Heart"

A Prayer for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

June 28, 2020

COLLECT

ALMIGHTY GOD, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

FIRST READING – Jeremiah 28:5-9

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord; and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the Lord do so; may the Lord fulfill the words that you have prophesied and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord, and all the exiles. But listen now to this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet."

PSALM 89:1-4, 15-18

(REFRAIN – *Your love, O Lord, for ever will I sing*)

¹ Your love, O Lord, for ever will I sing; *
from age to age my mouth will proclaim your
faithfulness.

² For I am persuaded that your love is
established for ever; *
you have set your faithfulness firmly in the
heavens.

³ "I have made a covenant with my chosen
one; *

I have sworn an oath to David my servant:

⁴ "I will establish your line for ever, *
and preserve your throne for all generations."

¹⁵ Happy are the people who know the festal
shout! *

they walk, O Lord, in the light of your
presence.

¹⁶ They rejoice daily in your Name; *
they are jubilant in your righteousness.

¹⁷ For you are the glory of their strength, *
and by your favor our might is exalted.

¹⁸ Truly, the Lord is our ruler; *
the Holy One of Israel is our King.

SECOND READING – Romans 6:12-23

DO NOT LET SIN exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord

THE GOSPEL – Matthew 10:40-42

JESUS SAID, “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple-- truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

SERMON – Fr. Carl Mosley

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ and welcome on behalf of St. Mary's Episcopal Church.

Evangelism. That is one word in the Episcopal Church which can cause a lot of folks to sit back and cringe. That's somebody else's job. Oh, I'll go to church and help with the brown bag lunch or help take clothes to the shelters and I'll bring a couple cans of soup or beans for the food for the food banks but when it comes to talking to others about Jesus and what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ, well, let the other guy do it.

Some faith groups seem be better at it than we are. As I have mentioned before I was raised Southern Baptist. I went to Petersburg, Virginia each summer to my Aunt and Uncle's for a month or so and it seemed to me I was never there without a camp meeting or tent revival going on some time during my visit. The cousins and I would sit at the back of the gathering and chuckle at all those folks who were healed or saved. But all of the singing and preaching did inspire some to answer the call to want to follow Jesus and be saved.

I can even remember going to a funeral service at a funeral home in Salisbury and the Baptist minister gave a rousing sermon on how we needed to turn away from our sins and be saved and he even had an altar call at the end of the funeral service for anyone who wished to profess their faith to come forward. No one did, but the invitation was given none the less.

How do we reach out to others? We heard last week about being sent out as sheep among the wolves. But we were told to go forward and baptize throughout the lands.

Servant evangelism can be as easy as demonstrating the kindness of God by offering to do some random act of humble service with no strings attached. Jesus in our Gospel today, when he gives us an example as he speaks of sharing a cup of cold water is speaking of the practicality of living the Christian life. Christianity and our relationship with God are a personal commitment but it is not meant to be private. Our life with God is a life that is designed to touch others in practical ways. We are told not to hide our light under a basket. We are told to put it on a lampstand and share it with others.

We need to share Jesus in practical ways. How do we do that. We can start with the small things to show the main thing which is to show God's love at work. Have you ever encountered the "What would you do challenge?" For example. You are driving along in a windy and stormy night. You pass a bus stop and 3 people are in the shelter waiting for the next bus to pass by. One is an older woman who looks as if she is about to die, one is an old friend who once saved your life and the third, well, that one is the perfect man or woman of your dreams. Who would you stop and offer a ride too? Would it be the older woman because she is going to die? Would it be your friend because they once saved your life or would it be that person of your dreams? You sit back and wonder. It should be no problem. You give the keys of your car to your friend to drive the older woman to the hospital and you stay with the person of your dreams and wait for the bus. You have to stop and THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX.

Jesus challenges his disciples and us here in Mathew's Gospel and in other places to do the small things to show the main thing in our relationship with God and that is to show God's love at work. In John's Gospel the night before he dies, he washes the feet of the disciples and challenges them to love others. We never fully know what small act of kindness that we perform in our lives will touch and transform a life.

I've told the story before of John Bowes, Chairman of parent company of Wham-O and Frisbees to what he did for an orphanage in Angola, Africa. He thought he would bring some joy and laughter to some of the children in the orphanage so he sent over boxes of Frisbees for the children to play with. When he visited the children, expecting them to thank him for the toy, they thanked him for the plate that they could eat off of by turning the Frisbee upside down. Some thanked him because they could use the Frisbee to get a drink of water out of the bowl that the Frisbee became. Again, that small act of a few "toys" helped people without the expected results.

God does know beyond our measure what we are capable of doing. Jesus also gives a hint of the impact that doing small things can help to show the main thing of God's love at work as given in Matthew's Gospel. When I was hungry you gave me something to eat, when I was thirsty you gave me something to drink, when I was a stranger you welcomed me, when I was naked you gave me clothes to wear, when I was sick you took care of me. Jesus went on and answered that whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for

me. Jesus gives the example in today's Gospel that even giving a cup of water because they are my disciples, that person will never lose his reward.

Simple acts done with great love can change the world. Think how God came into this world, not with bells and whistles or riding with white horses and trumpets blaring- he came as a baby. He touched people at their point of need, not just physically but spiritually to change their lives. He came and gave his life on a cross to pay for our sins and to change the world with love. God was aware that we would never get this on our own. So, he sent his son to live as one of us and to die for us. He gave us the Holy Spirit to be with us, to lead us to faith and to change our hearts.

God's desire is to use you and me with simple acts done with great love to change the world. One part at a time.

Realize that "service power" is not based on who I am but who Jesus is through me. Salvation and life with God are not by my power but by what Christ has done through me. None of this could I have done on my own. It is only by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge of who Jesus is and the message that he brought to the world 2,000 years ago.

We get to heaven, not by what we do, but by Grace and what Christ has done for you and for me. Sharing Jesus in practical ways with a cup of cold water, with a meal, with words of prayer, a listening ear or a ride to the doctor, it all is a call to just do it. Sharing the love of Christ. All of this out of the realization that Jesus did it in his life and his example. He died for us. He gives us eternal life. He empowers us with his presence and he challenges us to live out our purpose, maybe not in one big moment of life but by the little ones- a cup of water at a time given in his name. For as we do the small things, we show the main thing of God's love at work. Simple acts can change the lives of others and change the world. Simple acts done in love may seem so small, yet when you realize God is at work through them, you discover the great life of sharing Jesus in practical ways. Have you shared lately? Let's hope we never forget to think outside the box and share with others that we come into contact with every day. Then you too may become a servant evangelist for Christ. AMEN.

Fr. Carl+