

Sunday 10 May 2020
Mother's Day

Ephesians 4:1-6

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. There is one body and one spirit as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Let us pray: God we want to meet Your deepest desire. We want to live according to Your will. Help us to walk not according to our flesh but according to Your Holy Spirit. Teach us to treat others with humility and gentleness. Give us patience as we bear with one another. Help us maintain unity and peace. Allow our lives to be pleasing in your sight who is the God of all, above all, through all and in all. Amen.

“God's Desire”

On Mother's Day it is every mother's wish that her family to be together. This will probably not happen in person today for many of us. Mothers are not only desiring for their family to be physically present, but their prayer is that they might all not just get along but love and care for each other. Nothing will break a mother's heart faster than when her beloved family to torn apart by hurt feelings and hateful anger. A mother's prayer is for family's unity and peace.

This is also God's desire. When God looks at Their people unity is not found. Peace is not found. God sees too much spiritual pride and not enough humility. Instead of the church coming together as one body around one holy table, we keep fragmenting more and more. This is not God's desire for Their family.

God calls us to walk humbly before Them. We know little. We understand even less. And I am sure God has to laugh at our foolish posturing, to keep from crying over the damage we are doing in our relationships with other members of the family. When we walk humbly, we recognized that others have important information that God wants us to listen for and to understand. When we walk humbly, it means we have to keep ourselves open, flexible, ready to adapt and open to change how we live in the world.

What you believe and what you think is important and needs to be shared. However it is never, ever, the complete answer to what God wants us to know. As important as our contribution is to the whole, we must remember it is only a single little piece of the manna that God seeks to give to the world as a blessing. The more we share together, the greater the blessing. This is why when you your voice is missing from worship, or from Bible Study or from Sunday School, you rob others of your contribution to the blessing God is seeking to bestow upon the world. This is why the threat of splitting this or any denomination, only robs us of God's bountiful blessings. What we need is not fewer people around the table but more people, and more diverse people around the table. This has been the vision of the United Methodist Church from its start as we have sought to join with more and more ecumenical and

interreligious partners.

God wants us to be gentle with each other. God knows that we are fragile creatures. We are easily bruised. We all have our struggles and scars to show for it. We all have our fears of getting something wrong and even of failure. We are all doing the best we can, what God knows we need is some support and lots of encouragement. God wants us looking out for each other. If we stumble, and we do, God doesn't want someone to kick us when we are down, but to lend us a hand and help us back to our feet. God wants us to know that we are all on the same side, God's side. We are all members of the same family, God's family. When any of us succeed, we all succeed. When one of us grows and develops, it is more than an individual accomplishment, because it helps the whole family of God to become stronger and healthier. When Wesley had his heart warming experience, it was not just a personal experience, it has changed the world we live in. When I gave my life to Christ, I did not just open up my life to a relationship with God, it caused me to share that relationship with so many people all over the world.

God looks for us to be patient with each other. It has taken us a life time to get to where we are, and most of us are not quite done with this life yet. Others are not necessarily where we are at this moment. They may not have had the same opportunities we have had yet. They may not have finished reading the same books. They may still have more classes to take, and their classes may be more up to date than the ones I took back in the day. We do not want to be the cause of another's discouragement. It take a lifetime to be all God wants us to become.

It takes time to become a skilled pianist. If I want to play piano, I will have to begin with a beginners book, no matter what my age. Then I will move on to the next music primer and then the next. I will need to keep learning new techniques and with encouragement and a lot of patience with lack of skill, my teacher might get me to a point where I could even play for church. Without patience from myself and others, I will never play the piano, or learn to pray, or learn to listen for the voice of God, or become mindful of the presence of God alive in the world around me. But teacher have been patient with me, and I have gained so much. This is why God wants us to treat each other this way.

God desires for us to bear with one another in love; if not for their sake, then for God's sake. God wants us to bear with not just those who are like us, but with everyone. Jesus said that even sinner could love those who loved them. Jesus expects more from their disciples. God expects us to bear with people who are not like us at all. God expects us to bear with those who do not believe like us, nor understand the world like we do. God expects us to bear with those who do not speak our language. God would want us to go out of our way, to be the one who struggles to reach out to them, and not blow them off until they can speak in way our society might see as acceptable. What God is looking for is for us to find ways to come along side those who are struggling and give them support: physical, emotional, and spiritual support. God wants them to experience the reality of divine love through our forbearance.

God is expecting us to make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Unity of the spirit is not the same as agreement with one another on all things. What binds us together is not our uniformity of belief but the Love of God found in Christ Jesus. It is not found in our following the understandings of: Wesley, Calvin, Luther or Zwingli. It is not found in our following a Republican nor a Democrat. The Holy Spirit unifies us in this, that God loves all of us, everyone of us, those we like and those we don't, those we agree with and those we don't. We are unified not in what we do or believe, but by what God has accomplished for us in Christ, even though we barely comprehend it. We find this peace of God knowing that we are

loved by God and called his own, and everyone else is loved just as much. When we try to make our unity based upon something other than the love of God, it will generally fall a part into a bunch of children squabbling about something that is important to them but pure foolishness to God.

The truth, that we have a hard time embracing is that there is only one body. There are not two or three bodies. We are all of the same body, or none of us are. There is only one Spirit. The Spirit in me is the same Spirit that is in you. The Spirit that inspires us in Valley Forge is the same Spirit that inspires people in China or in the Democratic Republic of Congo and everywhere else. We all have the Spirit or none of us do.

There is only one hope that came when Christ spoke to our hearts, but it is exactly the same hope given to the whole world. If the hope we have in Christ is not universal than how do we know that any of us have it. There is only one Lord, not just mine or yours. Jesus is Lord of all. We don't have to validate his lordship. Jesus was Lord before we were born and will be Lord long after we are gone.

There is only one faith, because it is in what Christ alone has done for all. That faith may be understood differently by each of us as we grow in grace. There is only one baptism, no matter how or when it is done, we are immersed into the Love of God in Christ Jesus and come out with a new life.

There is only one God. There are not many Gods. There is only one God understood in many different ways and this one and only God is the Father of everyone, not just a chosen few. My God is not more real than someone elses God, because they are the same God. No one that is more important than God. There is no higher authority anywhere, ever. This one God works through everyone and everything. No one is unimportant. No one can be over looked nor ignored, otherwise we are ignoring the One God who is working through their lives and God is working through their lives no matter how much you dislike them or what they are doing in the world. Even with our sins God is able to create something good out of harm we have done. Even if it is only as a negative example for the rest of the world to learn from.

The One God we worship is in everyone. How we treat them is how we treat the God who dwells within them. When we discriminate against anyone, we are choosing to discriminate against God. This is why racial discrimination is a grave sin. It makes God's life harder. This is why the maltreatment of refugees is a grave sin. It slows down the work of God in the world. This is why the abuse and discrimination against women is a grave sin. The energy God uses to deal with the trama takes away from the good God was seeking to do through their lives. This is why war is incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because how we treat others even our enemies is how we are treating God who dwells within them.

This being said, on this Mother's Day what does God desire from us? God wants their children, you and me to get along, looking out for one another, especially the younger ones, and to remember that we are all family. God wants us to always know that God loves all of Their children and we are all Their children, None of us are ever left out of the family. No one is an outcast as far as God is concerned. We are all in this together, so God wants us to get along not just on Mother's day but always.

Let us pray: Thank you for Your family and thank You for allowing us all to be part of it. We know that to love You we must love all Your children. Forgive us for all those times we have not been very loving. Help us change and become more aware of

the needs of all our siblings. Help us to love them with the same gentleness, patience and forbearance that You have graciously shown each of us. We want to be just like You, Jesus. Amen.