

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST MEDITATION

JUNE 14, 2020

Dear Friends,

The prayer for this week's selected scriptures calls the church *God's household*. This prayer suggests to us a complex set of relationships and experiences, involving dependence and independence, loyalty and betrayal, joy and grief, industry and laziness, kindness and thoughtlessness, profundity and pettiness. This is the nature of a household; it is also the nature of the church.

The prayer also defines the church's task: to proclaim God's truth with boldness and minister God's justice with compassion. It is a job for which we are not qualified, just like the disciples, and that we cannot really measure our success, just like the disciples. There are two choices, give up or ask for help. In praying this collect, we are asking for help to face the challenges and our own human limitations.

But before we can minister God's justice with compassion, we must, as the prayer says, reside in God's faith and love. Our problem is that we misunderstand the nature of the God's truth. We think it is doctrines or idea or moral codes. But truth is not a proposition; it is a relationship with God in Christ. We are called to introduce others to the ways of love practiced by Christ wholly by our actions.

To minister God's justice is not to decide who deserves what, but to act justly ourselves, by dealing fairly and generously with one another and the rest of God's creation. And to act compassionately is to refuse to judge another person, however contrary to the will of God we may believe him to have behaved. With God's help through the Holy Spirit, we need to ask for the means to share the ways of God's love in our ordinary encounters and in our hope to be peacemakers, especially at this time in our lives.

O God, teach us again the source of true power for life. Feed us with spiritual food that will fill us with energy, courage, freedom, and authority that we may be your agents of healing in the world. Amen. (Walter Brueggemann, A Way Other Than Our Own, p. 37).

In Christ, Beverly+

The Collect

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Lessons: Exodus 19:2-8a; Psalm 100; Romans 5:1-8; Matthew 9:35-10:8

Unafraid

“Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.” Do we see ourselves as part of the Body of Christ that actually does cure, raise, cleanse and cast out? Distilled, it seems that two acts of discipleship according to Matthew are critical: healing and liberation.

Healing and liberation should not sound new to the disciples. They also function as a summation of Matthew’s Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount, from which all discourse on discipleship originates. Discipleship that is not demonstrative of these two essential marks of the Kingdom of Heaven is not discipleship from a Matthean perspective.

This is critical for the disciples to remember at this point in time -- participation in bringing about the Kingdom of Heaven must bare the meaning of Emmanuel. God’s presence heralds healing and liberation at hand. Discipleship that does not pass this litmus test may not hold up to any standards for discipleship.

We might want to consider whether or not these two principles are recognizable in how we go about living our lives and how we do church. If not these values, then what? What faith-based principles describe your life, our faith community’s life?

I suspect that often we don’t hold them very close to the surface of our lives. They are somewhere in there, deep inside, but the truth is we don’t depend on them very often or we take them for granted. We move about in the world with an unconsciousness about what’s spiritually important for us until we are forced to confess the truth -- if what we believe about Jesus actually matters for how we live our lives.

Does it? And just how? All kinds of decisions are made -- in our daily lives, in our churches, in our systems, and in our governments with general references to Jesus, allusions to the Bible, or nods to denominational commitments as if a religious mention is the same as having faith-based principles.

The Spirit of God visits our lives, our persons, our bodies, our imagination, our money with the freedom of God, so that we are unafraid in the world, able to practice the ways of love we have learned from Christ Jesus, able to do love not just talk about it.

Where do we begin to explore the role of “the unafraid disciples?” We tell and live the story of God’s love that brings about healing and liberation not just to each of us, but to those we meet.

Breathe your Spirit over us and all the earth, that barriers would crumble and divisions cease. Make us more fully your co-healers of the broken world. Unite us with all people in bonds of love, that the whole earth and all peoples may be at peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The Episcopal Church, Committee on Justice and Reconciliation).