

Sunday, February 18, 2018

Genesis 9:8-17

Psalm 25 752 VU

Mark 1:9-15

Putting Your Whole Self In

We are on a journey together. This journey began on Ash Wednesday and we will continue to walk together through the next 40 days (not including Sundays) until we reach the big celebration of the Christian Calendar- Easter. This season of Lent is a period in which our focus is in cultivating personal holiness and discipline and is a time for serving as the days lengthen as we get closer to spring. Lent is a time to reintroduce ourselves to our Christian roots through studying the Bible, rediscovering the covenants of the past and taking upon ourselves a deeper and meaningful way of living out our lives as Christians. For some people it is a time for reconciliation with others, or for longer periods of prayer, fasting and charitable acts. It is also a time when we might consider what it means to be a sinner from God's perspective and how Jesus on the cross dying can and does make a difference.

Many of you might remember singing the "Hokey Pokey" when you were a child or maybe you've even shared it with your children or grandchildren. The song is a simple way of teaching body coordination with singing as you stand in a circle and often when it is done you are laughing. You know the song I mean—you put your right hand in, right hand out, repeat this and then turn yourself about; this is the hokey pokey song and that's what it's all about. To continue this song you use your other arm, each leg in turn and then eventually you put your whole self in. And when you get to "you turn yourself about"- that's doing the hokey pokey—with your whole self, whole being. And that's all there is to it. But this song or dance just seems too simple and we might wonder is that really what it's all about?

What does life hold for us anyway? Is it only a series of learning concepts, tests, trials and examinations? Or is it more? How is it that God wants us to live and be? Just what is our mission, our purpose, our desire as we live each day for him. It would be so easy if we knew what is coming wouldn't it?

God called Noah to build an ark and to fill it with animals in order that they would be saved from floodwaters. Noah agreed and did as he was asked. Eventually the waters came and everything was flooded and destroyed. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights. The reason that the earth was destroyed at that time? Because in God's sight the earth was corrupt and was full of violence. And so the storms came to destroy the earth and its people. For over 150 days the waters flooded the earth but Noah and his family and the animals in the ark were saved. They

waited until the waters receded and eventually Noah and his family left the boat. It was then that God made the promise and entered into a covenant- an agreement with Noah and all who came after him. “Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth. This is the sign of the covenant—a rainbow.” This covenant was between God and all life on the earth- no longer would God flood the earth and destroy it God’s covenant after the flooding waters was symbolized by the rainbow.

When Jesus was baptized with water God spoke and identified Jesus as his son. At once the Spirit led him away into the desert. For 40 days and 40 nights Jesus was in the wilderness and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals and the angels attended him.

These two stories have three things in common:

- 1) water—rain for 40 days; the water of the Jordan River as Jesus is baptized;
- 2) God speaking- to Noah to build the ark, to save his family and the animals and to all who heard as Jesus rose from the water;
- 3) 40 days—a long period of time—for the rain to come down day after day; and for Jesus to be in the wilderness being tested and attended to.

And a covenant made by God—No longer will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; This is my Son, whom I love- with you I am well pleased—listen to him.

But most of all being saved by God through the water itself along with the promise that Jesus would come and save his people through his death and resurrection.

As we journey through Lent this year it is important to remember the water—of baptism, of life and death, and to know that water is essential for our living, just as Christ is essential for our eternal life.

Noah probably received a lot of flack from the people who watched him build the ark. Yet he heard God’s direction. He listened and put his whole self in to the mission of building that ark because God told him that the world would be destroyed by flooding. And once they were able to leave the ark – all things were new and they were ready to start to live and begin God’s new mission, new purpose for the world.

John the Baptist did not want to baptize Jesus but when Jesus came out of the water, and God spoke all knew that Jesus’ mission had changed. He was no longer the carpenter down the street. He was God’s Son and his purpose was to live, to die and rise again—he was to save the people from their sins, even though no one really understood what this meant. Jesus mission called for him to put his whole self in—and he started out by himself in the wilderness in

order that he would be tempted yes, but also to prepare for God's mission to be shared and shown through him.

As we begin this journey to the cross of Jesus, let us remember God's words. No longer will God destroy the earth with floods. Then God promised the rainbow in the sky as a reminder of this. Jesus is out in the wilderness and learning as much as he can to prepare for the events to come. He is being tempted as he talks, and as Jesus responds as he fully commits to the Father's plan. He is putting his whole being in and preparing for what lies ahead. And for Jesus this includes preaching, teaching healing many. It includes travelling the countryside with close friends. It also includes betrayal, trial, beatings and crucifixion. This leads to death and burial. But as Jesus does teach he does rise again with new life and hope.

We are on this Lenten journey together. Let us also follow Jesus' example- as he went into the wilderness to prepare—even though we might not be tempted in the same ways; we will be tempted to turn away from God. But God is calling us to re-turn to him- to see the rainbow of promise, to know that the angels who attended to Jesus' needs will tend to ours. As we make this journey let us be reminded that we are not alone- we have each other as Christ's brothers and sisters. Let us remember this as God calls us to believe act and serve. It is up to us to decide whether we will choose to feel the water of change and walk together on this journey. Are we willing to put in earplugs to silence the noise of the world to carry on in faith? And are we willing to put our whole self in to God's mission and by being open to hear God's voice wherever we go and in whatever we do.

Let us pray;

Holy God of grace and love we thank you for this Lenten season where we are called to put ourselves into the mission of Christ Jesus, to believe the promises of old, and to trust God.

Hear us O God as we pray to you-- SILENCE: call us to believe, act and serve in Jesus name.

For we are on a journey of love given and received, and a journey to the Cross of Christ. Amen.