

Sunday, October 20, 2019

Be His: In Christ Alone

Our fall series continues with what it means to “Be- a part of Christ’s Church” and particularly today part 2 of what “Being His” means. Also today we are celebrating older adults who are 80+ years and who have and continue to serve God throughout their life and particularly how they continue to live out their faith and support and serve this church. This service, followed by lunch and afternoon program is an opportunity to thank God for the life we share together through the many generations which make up this church family.

How do we honour people who continue to show us what to do, what to say and even teach us more than any of us realizes by just being present, expressing concerns, support and sharing their life with us. We say Thank you. We offer these magic words because we know that God has enabled us to be his church here in this place at this time. And through the eyes of our seniors, the church has changed but the one thing that is constant is that Jesus is our focus and that everything has its purpose and time and place. The writer of Ecclesiastes comments that everything has its time—no matter what we are talking about. Whether it is being born or dying, planting or harvesting and even hating and loving. And it is this time that we celebrate—time shared, spent, effort offered and received as gift, and all done without counting the cost or looking to be thanked.

But just what does it mean to continue to be his throughout our lives. In recent conversations people have shared about their role in the church or what they like about being a part of Glenwood:

I may not do as much as I used to but this is my church and my church family and like family I need to see them as often as possible because I love them.

I know I can’t do as much physically as I once did—but I can pray, and there are a lot of prayers needed for our church people to keep working and walking with God.

There’s always a lot of energy—great outreach projects, great stories and caring people—I know I’m loved.

I still enjoy the old hymns- why don’t we sing the old hymns any more—well today we are singing older hymns including “When he cometh” which I always thought referred to real precious stones worn by the older men and women of the church.. yet it is really referring to the children of God who shine for Christ. And the great thing about these jewels—grow up to be even more precious with time.

I know Jesus loves me. I've been his for a very long time and look forward to when he will welcome me home.

Paul writes to his beloved friend Timothy words of encouragement to keep strong. Paul is older and experienced in what it means to establish a church, teach salvation in the gospel message of Jesus' life death and resurrection, and to tell how people may be forgiven of sin and to live in faith. We're not sure how old Paul was when he wrote to Timothy, but he addresses the young man as 'my beloved child'. And in ch.3 of his second letter Paul recalls what Timothy has been taught. Timothy observed Paul's teachings, his conduct, his aims in life, his faith, patience, love, steadfastness, persecutions and sufferings. He observed and he learned. And Paul proclaims how God rescued him from his suffering. He then tells Timothy: Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith.

This to me is wisdom from one generation of believer to the next. Because this is what has been taught in this church for almost 65 years and continues to be priority. One generation to the next observed each other and traditions were established; but importantly lessons on living life in God, following the teachings of Jesus were lived out and shared openly. And for this act of love- we give thanks. Traditions are important and yet as we look to the church how we share Christ's commission has changed because the world has evolved for both good and bad reasons. Paul showed by example what was important for righteous living and he describes for Timothy what has been taught- and why. The knowledge of scripture is useful for teaching, reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient and equipped for every good work. And this is true and continues to be as we learn and grow in faith and in understanding of the Bible.

But there never seems to be enough time does there? This was even true when after His resurrection when Jesus told the disciples to meet near a mountain in Galilee. Even after some saw him, they did not believe it was Jesus. So when they saw him, they worshiped him as Jesus stood in their presence. He then explained to them who he was as he proclaimed, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Now I am telling you what to do. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember this- I am with you always to the end of the age."

Life is hard and yet we know there will be days which are absolutely wonderful. When the colours of the leaves are brightened by the sun, when the wind blows leaves at our feet and the air is clean and bright. Or when you wake up and you realize that you have no physical pain because of medication which helps you to breathe better, move better and even smile more often. Or when you walk with a child who is seeing bugs for the first time and asking endless questions. Those are the moments which fill our lives with hope, love, peace and joy. And no doubt if I were to ask you to name one of those moments—you could. Think on those moments of celebration—life and death and everything in between.

As we gather together today- we have been and will have those moments together—this is because we are people of the Promise; people of faith, and yes we are an Easter people filled with hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we have been given an enormous task which has been handed down through generations and continues to be.

But what is this task? To go and make disciples in Jesus' name. This has been the task of the church from its inception and through the life of this church, disciples have been made because of people committed to serving our church and keeping the Spirit of God alive in this place. And it is now up to the next generation to listen, to teach and do just as you have been doing, knowing that you are being prayed for and encouraged by others.

Making disciples- means telling the story of Jesus again and again. It means knowing his birth, death and resurrection story is not just words printed, but words of hope expressed with emotion and wonder. It means believing those words of the story of Jesus and being able to say "In Christ alone" is where your hope is found. In Christ Jesus is where you have found strength, depth of peace, love, comfort and above all things—the gift and promise of Eternal life. And this shows you belong to him; you are his and it is by faith in Christ alone you live.

Let us pray: God of many blessings we thank you for those 80+ people whom we call our church family for they have and continue to show us how to live in Christ's way. Bless them we pray and may the vision we have of life- be filled with Jesus our Saviour. Amen.