

Sunday, May 14, 2023 ***“The Spirit will Come!”***

Acts 17: 22-31 John 14:15-21

Today is Christian Family Sunday as well as Mother’s Day. Many have wondered why we call this Christian Family in the church even though we know that we each come from a mother. There are many people who do not have a mother- child relationship, or some have painful or complicated relationships with mothers. Christian Family Sunday offers us an opportunity to explore family in a new way. When we reflect on families there is no perfect one. The ideal tv family has moved from the Cleavers, All in the Family to shows like Modern Family or families that are blended, smaller and connected to others more than themselves. More and more blended families of different people are what is now acceptable. But the key thing about any family is unconditional love but sometimes our birth, adoptive or foster families might fail us, we need to remember that God’s does not.

Christian Family Sunday is a celebration of the parents, grandparents, siblings and children we gain when we accept our place in God’s family. Lived out, it’s not always perfect, but we continue to try our best to embody God’s kingdom on earth!

There is a story about a mother who was trying to get her young boy to go to bed one evening. To encourage him to rest she laid down with him. She read stories to him:1,2,3, 4... and still he did not fall asleep. However during the fifth story, the mother fell asleep but the boy did not. After about 15 minutes or so the mother woke up and she saw the boy sitting on a chair at the end of the bed and asked, “What are you doing?”

"I'm playing God," he replied. "Playing God?" she asked. "Yes," he said. "I'm watching over you while you sleep." She wasn't too sure what to say next but soon the boy was ready to go to sleep and the mother tucked him in again.

“I’m playing God... and watching over you.” Sometimes we do not get what children understand as something so easy that is being carried out. This child was taught well that God does watch over us when we are active, when we are asleep and even when we are trying to get others to rest for the night. This story also illustrates something important too. The parent

shared their faith about God and the child understands and believes that God is watching. The child believes and accepts that under God's watchful eye, all are safe and all is well.

In this changing post pandemic era where people are re-searching or seeking meaning in their lives of what is most important, what is foundational for many parents is often around the question just what should my children be learning? School subjects of importance have changed significantly- use of computers and typing skills as well as coding are essential for children to express themselves efficiently. The words and symbols of ideas expressed has changed and increased the pace of learning. No longer are slates and slate pencils in use, but also gone for some generations is the use of a pen and paper. But what is foundational to learn today has even been questioned about what is necessary for skills and work placement for tomorrow.

Yet when we think about the generations of learning- what was key for you as a child growing up? Was it the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic or the difference between right and wrong? Were the extras taught by your family of origin or from teachers who taught you how to think and act?

As we consider these matters today let us look to what Jesus taught His disciples. In John 14:15 we read "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever. "But what are Jesus' commandments? What are we to teach one another as followers of Jesus? What are we to teach the children- next generations?

From Mark 10 17ff; Jesus is met by a man who asks him "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. He continued, "You know the commandments- You shall not murder, not commit adultery, not steal, not bear false witness, no defrauding and honour your mother and father. The man answers," I have kept these since my youth." Jesus then says you lack one thing-go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come follow me." This was difficult for this man to hear and do for he was very wealthy.

Jesus then states, "Children how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! But to God all

things are possible. And this is what is necessary to teach children and others as we grow in faith that with God all things are possible. That there is hope beyond this temporary life on earth; that there is a promised place of rest far greater than what we may experience here on earth. But today is a gift an extraordinary gift of just being present one with each other as a family gathered together to focus on God- Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. God the One who calls us together and also sends us out to tell Jesus' story of love.

The disciples were learning about Jesus and about what was to come. He told them that He is the way to God. And Jesus also said the one day he would ascend to God the Creator. But with the disciples needing guidance on what their promised tasks would be, Jesus told them, 'I will not leave you orphaned. I am coming to you. Jesus said even though the world would not see him, they would know his presence because He lives and all those who believe also live.

God would also give them another Advocate/ to be with them forever. This is the Spirit of truth. The holy spirit of God.

Of the Trinity of God- Creator-Father, Christ-the Son and Spirit- it is the Spirit that is not understood the most. We move past the does God exist? To the hope and prayer that the Spirit is in our midst no matter what we say and do and with whom we share Jesus' story. When we look to God's promise of this Spirit in our everyday life, we might wonder is the Spirit of God real? Does the Spirit of God make a difference in your life?

When Paul was travelling and establishing the churches of Jesus, there was a time when he was in Athens Greece and standing in front of a group of people- Athenians. He states that he sees them as religious people because of what he saw in the city with all the objects of worship. You might know a little bit of what he is referring to here—Greek Gods- Zeus, Posiedon, Apollo, Hades. What Paul also noticed was that there were items with "To an unknown god" inscribed on them. IT is then that Paul states to the newly Greek Christian believers and those listening, God is known and this is because you know the God I speak of, through Jesus His Son and through the Spirit of God that you come to know God too! This God is the creator- lord of heaven and earth who doesn't live in shrines made by people or served

by people because it is God who gives to all life and breath itself. For it is in God that we live and move and have our being. It is in God that we have hope.

SO when this little boy says to his mother after she wakes up from sleeping- I'm playing God why does this story resonate something positive? Because God is with us even now. IF we believe in God then this Spirit encircles us to receive encouragement, love and support. IF we do not, the Spirit will seek out others and call them to act and serve in Christ's way.

The Spirit that will come and has come is with us because our faith is shared one to another. As we seek answers to living today, we are offered the promise that the true God is waiting and watching for us and ready to be known by us. But we as a community of faith, as family and friends need to come to know God in love. And to do this we must open our hearts hear the words of Jesus, wait patiently for the Spirit to come and to be ready for the Spirit to move in our hearts. When the Spirit comes we will feel it and the world will evolve and change. But we must be willing to find rest in God- to enable God to watch over us and guide us. We must be willing to receive God's gift of Jesus as Saviour and know that we are not alone- God is with us.

When we feel the Spirit we will experience newness of life and breath and we will be able to say that God is with us. When we pray we renew our faith and we know again that God is with us.

On this Day when we celebrate families- parents, children, and our church families we give thanks to God for the Spirit that moves us to show and share our love. Let us pray:

Holy God of grace and hope you are with us as we worship and we thank you for the Spirit promised to us by Jesus. We pray that we may love you and trust you to watch over us and love us always. Hear these prayers of our hearts knowing that your Spirit will come to us all.

SILENCE> Amen.