

Sunday, November 22, 2020

Ephesians 1:15-23 Matthew 25:31-46

The Separation

How closely have you been following the news and weather this week? The number of covid19 cases is increasing across the country, and if we do not stop the spread, the number of people who will contract this virus will be more than the hospitals can handle. There is now a lockdown in areas near Toronto. What about Hurricane Iota which is the 30th hurricane in the Atlantic and is leaving much destruction in Central America? Then we also hear of local schools closing because of several cases being made known. And then there is a local family grieving the death of a little girl who died as a result of a hit and run accident with no one taking responsibility. It seems the news we hear is not good- people are grieving, hurting, afraid and for many people it is a question of what will happen to us/ to me?

In these last weeks we have been reflecting upon Jesus' teachings of how to live as his faithful followers. We are to be like Jesus to trust God fully with our lives. We will be tested in life but if we continue to live each day in relationship with God we need not be afraid of what the next day will bring. Jesus was tested by those who questioned how he could perform miracles. He was asked about the greatest commandment and he answered by sharing the message of how we ought to live—Love God, Love People. We also learned about the saints of God being ordinary people who lived, sinned and were forgiven by God. Being ready for any challenge is also a part of living for God. Being ready when we are called home means knowing him and receiving God's grace and forgiveness. Being ready also means knowing that if God calls an end to the world- we will be with him forevermore because of what we have done in our lives. Being ready means knowing God, the Father, Son and Spirit as the One who reigns in our hearts and prayerfully and hopefully in the world. We have received many gifts and talents from God but what we do with these is our gift to God. This includes telling others who we are, what we believe and living in the way of God. This includes fully knowing and believing that there is hope beyond this world. There is hope because God has not given up on us- He is with us and we are reminded of this in the glimpses of love and care as people continue to live.

There is hope for our world as people are helping those in Central America who have been bombarded by two hurricanes in two weeks. There is hope because two pharmaceutical companies are working diligently and are now in trial stages for what they hope will combat the virus. And there is hope because the world is searching. They are looking to be renewed in

something bigger than themselves. And they are looking for ways to combat fear for tomorrow and looking to God and questioning how they might be in relationship with God as their lives will not longer be the same as they once were—pre-covid/ pre-storms/ pre-loss and grief and mourning all of it. And this is where we who believe are called to live out our faith. We are being called to share our hope in Jesus Christ. Do you believe that God is the ruler of all, that Jesus is the King of all who claim to have power on earth, and that the Spirit guides all people? This is foundational to our Christian faith but not everyone proclaims Jesus as King!

This is Reign of Christ Sunday and is the last Sunday of the Christian year! It is not so much as a climax day in our church year but it is a transitional day which leads to Advent and preparing for Christ's birth- Christmas. Many stores have had Christmas decorations and items for sale since before Halloween and with the American Thanksgiving celebration coming this Thursday the commercialism of Christmas will continue to grow. As we observe Christ the King Sunday, we emphasize the connection between the sovereignty, or our faith belief that Jesus is King of Kings with the expectation of Jesus' coming again in glory! We have more than a baby Jesus at Christmas, we have the One who is was and will be the Christ. We need to acknowledge this and be glad! Joy to the world! The lord is come: Let earth receive her King!

But who is this King of glory? What shall we call him? Jesus is the Son of God who came to save his people. When Jesus shares the parable of the separation he proclaims the great judgment. On the right side he puts the sheep and on the left he places the goats. The sheep are blessed by God the Father and they will inherit the kingdom prepared for them. Those who are blessed as the ones who fed the hungry, gave a drink to the thirsty, who welcomed the stranger, gave them clothing as needed and took care of others when they were sick. They also visited those incarcerated in prison. These righteous followers of the king will receive eternal life through faith and through their actions of service. To those on the left, who did none of these things, they are separated and will experience eternal punishment. How are we to understand this judgment of God is based upon how we embrace the most vulnerable, how we react to those in need and what the intention of our actions involves.

If you believe that Jesus reigns as king in your heart, you have nothing to fear because of God's saving actions. First, God embraces us all. God is inexplicable- we don't fully know why wants to be in relationship with us. But we know that it is real and tangible for we know that lives are changed through Him. There is both hostility and welcome as individuals struggle to receive God's grace but it is God who calls us all to respond. When the separation comes, you will be held accountable for your life. Will you be blessed and receive eternal life? Or will you

experience eternal punishment? Now is the time to consider and to act. To come to Christ Jesus and seek his loving hand and forgiveness. Now is the time to know the One we call Saviour, Christ and Son of God. For when you know the Christ of the cross, your life has a purpose and your actions will be pleasing to God. And you will be able to offer to God your praise knowing that you will live eternally with Him.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta wrote this Meditation based on these verses from Matthew 25:35-46 which shaped her ministry and her life.

When I was hungry, you gave me to eat. When I was thirsty, you gave me to drink
When I was homeless, you opened your doors. When I was naked, you gave me your coat.
When I was weary, you helped me find rest. When I was anxious, you calmed all my fears.
When I was little, you taught me to read. When I was lonely, you gave me your love.
When in a prison, you came to my cell. When on a sick bed, you cared for my needs.
In a strange country, you made me at home. Seeking employment, you found me a job.
Hurt in a battle, you bound up my wounds. Searching for kindness, you held out your hand.
When I was Black, or Chinese, or White, mocked, and insulted, you carried my cross.
When I was aged, you bothered to smile. When I was restless, you listened and cared.
You saw me covered with spittle and blood, You knew my features, though grimy with sweat.
When I was laughed at, you stood by my side. When I was happy, you shared in my joy.
“I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me.”

This is Jesus Christ, our Saviour, the Son of God, the King of Glory. Let us rejoice and praise his holy name.

PRAYER:

God you call us to serve. Enable us to hear you and to act. We call you God- Father Son and Spirit and praise you because Jesus is the King of Kings and reigns in our hearts forever. Praise be to you O God. Amen.