

Sunday, October 3, 2021

Psalm 26:1-3, 6-8, 11-12 | Corinthians 11:23-26

Matthew 28:16-20 Mark 10:13-16

### “Uniting Words- Baptism and Communion”

“Words, words and actions” is our current sermon series with today’s focus on “uniting words”. How often do you connect words with what you do? Each day newspapers around the world print or put online thousands of word games including search words, crosswords, cryptic puzzles, as well as words of the day. Whether it is on a phone app or coming into computer inboxes, or even with a hard copy newspaper, word games have been a part of our world for a long time. The first-ever crossword puzzle ran in the New York World newspaper on December 21, 1913 and now over one hundred years later, these puzzles are still extremely popular. Why? Because as people we communicate with words. It is also known that doing puzzles, keeps our minds alert and our thought processes active and may even slow down the onset of dementia as we age. We know that each day thousands of people hours are spent in filling out the white squares to discover and learn new words for the simple pleasure of finishing the puzzle. For these individuals, what unites them is the sense of learning words, seeing how they may connect and the links that the individual puzzle might have with the next one. Puzzle makers and solvers are word people and look to dictionaries of different eras to stump, teach and call the devout puzzler to challenges every day. Words also may call us to action and as we believe words also call us to faith in Jesus.

But what unites us as we gather to worship in person and online? How do we engage each other to experience God’s Spirit? And how might we share uniting action with others? One of the key ways, is through speaking words that have meaning or a specific meaning. In the history of the church there have been many words used which have confused or alienated people because big words do not have the same impact they once did. This is because we do not use large words to convey a message that may be texted or tweets in less than 150 characters. So the message using words has to be concise and precise!

In the community of faith we might ask what unites us in our words? For some people it is the words of beloved hymns; or the words of well know scripture passages; or the words of familiar prayers and even the words used in the sacraments which have a long tradition in meaning. But most of all what unites us as Christians is God’s Word for us recorded as scriptures- the Bible. This is why it is so important to read, to learn and understand what the books of the Bible teach, and tell us today.

In our scripture readings today we heard the words of Paul to the church at Corinth about the Lord’s Supper. These words from I Corinthians 11 are called the Words of Institution and are stated in some form each time we share communion, because Jesus stated them at the last supper before he was arrested, tried and crucified.

We also heard the story of Jesus blessing children as their parents brought them. The disciples spoke sternly to the parents about what was happening and Jesus saw this. He was indignant and told the disciples, “let the little children come to me, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” He then took the children in his arms, blessed them as he laid his hands upon them in love. Through Jesus’ example of welcoming and blessing children, as a church we welcome children in our worship services, as we share in special moments and sacred times of baptism and with wonder as we eat and drink the elements of communion. Jesus welcomed children and so do we in all aspects of our church life.

But what truly unites us as a church family is the Great Commission Jesus gave to his disciples before he ascended into heaven. He states, “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, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Jesus defined the purpose of the disciples and the church which would begin with the coming of the Holy Spirit—make disciples. And how we are to do this is through the teaching of words- from Jesus story as recorded in the Bible to all who would listen. Disciples around the world have done this for over 2000 years and right now the need has arisen to start again! Our post pandemic world needs to hear these words which unite us, teach us and engage us in every day living. And so we carry on as best as we can by speaking words which unite us.

We have shared with the Facey family very special moments in their family life. Gabriel is now a member of God’s family through words which unite us. Jesus called children to be blessed; the water of baptism has been shared and those in person have felt the water which reminds us of our own baptism. We are individuals, yes, but we are community of believers who have used words to promise and rededicate their purpose in making disciples. But we know we cannot do it alone. WE need God’s Spirit to guide us and to show us the way forward.

We need to be strengthened for the journey which lies ahead into this last quarter of 2021 and into 2022. The future is not known, but we who are faithful followers of Jesus, who eat and drink of the meal prepared for us, know and believe that Jesus will lead the way.

What unites us-is faith in Christ. Just like the thousands of people worldwide who will eat and drink of this holy meal today. Are we ready to re-unite our words first shared by Christ, in order that we will be renewed, strengthened and willing to put them into action? In sharing the sacred and holy moments together this day, we are truly united in faith and with hope. Let us remember this as we unite our hearts in prayer.

PRAYER God of grace, we are one as we come together in this place. We are grateful for those whom we meet in person and for each person who is online and livestreaming our worship time together. God we ask for your blessing upon each of us as we are each your children in faith and seek your blessing so that we might continue to hear your word for us this day. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.