

Sunday, September 19, 2021

Psalm 1 James 3: 13-4:3 Mark 9: 30-37

“Fruitful Words- Hope is Here”

What does it mean to worship and who are we worshipping today? Television calls us to watch reality programming that give us American Idol and individuals with “The Voice” but if I were to ask, most of you would not know who won these contests which try to grab our attention over 3 months of programming. Television in itself has changed so much in the last decade that with over 1000 stations available for some subscribers, there is still ‘nothing new’ to watch. It used to be that the shows broadcast the night before were the watercooler topic at work or even the locker discussion at school. Today young people don’t really know about watercoolers and many people are working from home. Kids don’t generally watch regular tv but some obscure video will get people talking- maybe. So what is it that gets our attention, what gets us excited and what is it that people are searching for right now? What are we called to do as we get ‘back to church’? Who is worthy of our worship and praise?

There is a yearning in the hearts of men and women not just during this time, but there has always been this need to worship the Creator- because people have needed to connect with the One who made them and all that surrounds them. To truly worship is to stop and listen and look for the Source of all hope so that we will be guided and led to grow throughout our lives. What does it mean to grow in faith?

Last week we spoke about the power of words that we share in any given moment or over the course of our lifetime. We use our words to express our ideas, thoughts and feelings. And we are also to use our words to share faith in God for God is the source of wisdom and hope. As children we look to our parents to guide us to truth and learning and we learn a lot from them throughout our growing up years. However, we also need to look at our lives as a means by which we share our learning with others.

Our reading from the First Psalm tells us why we should be reading God’s word and meditating on it daily. If we get in the habit of reading the Bible each day we will be like a tree that is well nurtured and watered because it is planted by a water source. This stream provides

the tree what it needs and it grows. If we read about the people who lived and loved God before us we are given words which like the fruit of a tree is nutritious and good for us and our well being. We grow in understanding and knowledge, yes, but we also receive and have hope. This hope enables us to look forward to what is to come and to be prosperous.

But what kind of hope grows in us through knowing God's teachings? One example is simply knowing that God watches over us all. And by having hope we can live fruitful lives! Hope lives here. This is the focus of this back to church Sunday because we need hope! We need to understand what it means to be filled with hope in Christ Jesus just as we need to be hopeful about tomorrow's problems being resolved today.

There are at least four types of hope and each offers us the wisdom and support of this church family as we journey in this life together.

- 1) We need to have hope that is realistic. This kind of hope is for an outcome that is reasonable and possible. When one we know is in chronic pain, even though that complete eradication is unrealistic in some cases, we still have hope that there will be an ease of this. This is realistic hope. We know the overall diagnosis is not great and we understand this, but what we hope for is less pain, and with it some easiness.
- 2) Utopian hope. This is a collectively oriented hope that focuses a combined action which will lead to a better future for everyone. That all will be perfect.
- 3) Chosen hope. This kind of hope helps us live with a problematic present in an uncertain hope. Choosing hope for the smallest range of goals is essential to control negative emotions. We might experience several situations where hope seems lost, but in order to cope, hope enters and we can move forward.
- 4) Transcendent hope is also known as existential. This kind of hope is not tied to a specific outcome but a general hope that something good can happen. IT is based on positivity and may be fulfilled through both small and large actions.

To be hope-filled means also to learn and grow in understanding of life and its challenges. Today our world is at our fingertips- we can google anything and pick up from

Wikipedia all sorts of answers to our questions. But what are we learning? Facts, figures, numbers which are soon forgotten. So from where do we derive our wisdom? How might we show our good life? James tells us that we share our good life with gentleness and in truth. How are you doing this in these days of a pandemic?

When was the last time you picked up your phone and shared some of God's wisdom you have learned with another person? The fruit of God's wisdom is a harvest of actions that enable people to get along with each other. As James writes, wisdom that comes from God is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and is good fruit. There is no envy and selfish ambition nor disorder or wickedness. This wisdom then produces righteousness and this leads to reconciliation between people and God. If this occurs, we say we have made peace with God and live forevermore with a deeper faith and the hope that leads us beyond our death into eternal life.

Which baseball, hockey, basketball, football team is better? If I opened up this discussion for everyone we would probably never agree because the best of these teams change and are challenged each game they play and what occurs in each inning, period, or quarter. This is similar to what the disciples were arguing about and they really didn't want to tell Jesus. But amongst themselves, they were arguing about who was the greatest. Jesus sat them down told them that the greatest is the one serves others, and is the least amongst them. They really did not understand so, Jesus called a child to him and said, "That whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me." Who is the greatest amongst us?

The greatest amongst us is the one who is the least- the one who cannot speak out but shouts out anyway; the one who continues to believe; the one who resists resentment and the one who expects things to happen. The greatest amongst us are those who have hope. For they believe anyway and they expect God to answer. They hear God's voice and they have faith and know to act. The greatest amongst us puts the needs of others before themselves and to do even the lowest tasks which might be seen as trivial or lowly. But the greatest amongst us also is wise in the knowledge of God's love because they have opened their heart and mind to

receive it. With greatest they are also humble enough to know that they are not in charge, and they also believe that God is.

Fruitful words are words that cause us to grow in knowledge and understanding of the relationship we can have with God and with each other as people. Those who believe and serve God have hope strong enough to bring about change in the lives of others and gentle enough to be present when reasonable hope is lost. How we understand Christ's love for us means living out our lives with hope in our hearts. Are we willing to do this? For if we are, we can learn so much more through sharing His words of hope with each other.

PRAYER

God of love hear these words as we offer them in praise to you. You give us words to tell your story but often we turn away or choose not to do this. Help us O God to be able to share the fruit of knowledge that we receive through reading the Bible and learning Christ's story and teachings. Bless us we pray as we seek to grow in faith and closer to you. You are our God and worthy of all praise You are God= Father, Son and Spirit and we praise you as we worship in love and hope. Amen.