

Pentecost #13

8/30/2020

Matthew 16:21-28. Romans 12:9-21

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Celebrate (Introduction)

“The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the incurable wound of his suffering yet finds in God’s words the delight of his heart. When Peter doesn’t grasp Jesus’ words about suffering, Jesus tells the disciples they will find their lives in losing them. Such sacrificial love is described by Paul when he urges us to associate with the lowly and not repay evil with evil. In worship we gather as a community that we might offer ourselves for the sake of our suffering world.”

Opening Hymn: [“Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty”](#)

Psalm 26:1-8

Vindicate me, O Lord,
for I have walked in my integrity,
and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.
² Prove me, O Lord, and try me;
test my heart and mind.
³ For your steadfast love is before my eyes,
and I walk in faithfulness to you.^[a]
⁴ I do not sit with the worthless,
nor do I consort with hypocrites;
⁵ I hate the company of evildoers,
and will not sit with the wicked.
⁶ I wash my hands in innocence,
and go around your altar, O Lord,
⁷ singing aloud a song of thanksgiving,
and telling all your wondrous deeds.
⁸ O Lord, I love the house in which you dwell,
and the place where your glory abides.

Hymn of Praise: [“Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“O God, we thank you for your Son, who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Humble us by his example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow your commands, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Jeremiah 15:15-21](#)

2nd Reading: [Romans 12:9-28](#)

The Gospel: [Matthew 16:21-28](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“Father Most Holy”](#)

The Message: ([Video](#))

Nature has its way of telling us that regardless of what we may think and how we may act that its power is beyond our limited abilities to restrain it without severe destruction. We are vividly reminded of this with the latest powerful hurricane which has struck our shores. Along with the on-going pandemic and lightning caused forest fires, we are being tested to our limits.

During times of pending emergencies and the actual emergency the best and the worst can be seen in mankind. I have seen both during times of hurricane flooding in Fell’s Point. In preparation for incoming threats of flooding, the city always delivers several truckloads of sand for residents to fill sand bags. I can vividly remember landscaping companies from the county coming to fill up their trucks with sand. “Hey, free sand.” Now this was supposed to be for people with city ID’s but what a few dollars can do under the table. Many of the early residents just had to wait since these landscape workers made short work of the first truckloads of sand. Then there were those residents who had filled bags and put them in place in the front of their buildings only to find that they had disappeared over night. It is sad to see people take advantage of situations regardless of who may be hurt even during times of emergencies.

That was one side of the picture. On the other hand I saw people helping each other fill sand bags and helping to load wagons and cars for people who obviously could not do it themselves. I saw residents making several trips to fill bags and take them to elderly neighbors and neighbors who had to work or who were away on vacation. There were neighbors looking after neighbors and helping each other to prepare for that which could have been a disastrous event.

This experience in Fell’s Point is nothing out of the ordinary for mankind throughout history. Even though mankind’s worst may seem to be overwhelming and totally in control, there always seems to be good which happens also. Even during the times of the bloodiest warfare there come stories which are beyond belief for they tell of acts of compassion even between enemies. There is always that goodness which is present and wants to be expressed against all odds. We are not only born with the nature or the proclivity towards evil or to wrong our fellow human beings. We were not only born to be greedy, egocentric, materialistic, and power hungry, although at points in life these may seem to rule. We were not only born to be sinful and unclean although we can all relate to that in one way or another. If life is just these negatives then life is a sorrowful, agonizing existence and not worth living.

Life is so much more than all the negatives we can pile up and point to throughout the history of mankind. There is also the goodness of mankind. It is this goodness which always gives hope and brings life to those in need. But these positive acts rarely make it on the news and into our history books. Although they are extremely important to life, they only seem to become known through some incidental mention. They rarely become the story.

This is a shame since so many times acts which help people and acts of a positive nature often demand extreme sacrifices. It is such sacrifices which Jesus is referring to when He told His disciples "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." The sacrifice Jesus was talking about is that of denying oneself of what restricts or blocks the positives of human nature. He calls for the denial of these instincts which live life as self-centered, self-promoting, and self-serving. This may seem to be easy and natural but when push comes to shove it is anything but. We are constantly surrounded with the temptation to yield to these negative human instincts.

Jesus goes on to clarify His statement, "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who love their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their lives?" To clarify further let me paraphrase this. For those who wish to save their life through their negative, self-serving pursuits will end up losing their life. They will find death as a finality and ultimately life's pursuits as utter futility. On the other hand, those who love their life by living the life in Christ, although they may lose some of their earthly treasures, will ultimately find that life is eternal in God's loving presence. Life which travels the path of earthly goals and ambitions produce the negatives of life - hate, bitterness, anger, prejudice, greed, warfare, death and destruction. That is the side of life which not only Jesus warns us against but which, although self-serving, is ultimately self-denying.

On the other hand, there is the way of God's will as found in Jesus. This is the way which Paul so beautifully describes in His letter to the Romans: "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor." Just think what life would be like if these words would be the core of the life of this world. This is what we as Christians profess but often our other human instincts lead us astray. Paul knew this so he goes on to give encouragement, "Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord." Here is where the rubber hits the road. It takes real commitment, a real desire to live God's love; it takes the very spirit of our lives in order to be His servant, His disciple. It is this zeal in the Good news which allows us to overcome all the negatives which may tempt us in life. It is this encouragement which the church is to provide, this is the function of the Body of Christ, the fellowship of believers.

It is with this zeal that we can understand the joy and reality of Paul's next statement, "Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer." By living this will of God through Jesus we then will not just be hopeful but we will live hope and that hope will bring the healing power which will see us through any of the negatives in life. It is only God's living presence and the acceptance of His love which can give such hope. This hope is then realized through a life of

prayer. A prayerful life which knows that God is a constant companion as we face all that life has to offer.

When all of this happens then we will completely share our lives with each other whether that be with saints or sinners, friend or stranger, destitute or diseased, ally or enemy. Answering our brothers and sisters in need will be a joyful act of thanksgiving.. “Contribute to the needs of the saints, extend hospitality to strangers.” It is living a respect and regards for others which is so lacking among many in today’s society.

This life in Christ then goes the extra mile in answering the negatives in life by extending the love of God even to those who may be our enemy. There is only one way to overcome that animosity and hatred of those we considered to be our enemy. There is only one way to overcome all of the negatives which mankind can produce and that is through love. Love is the ultimate of positives and thus has the ability to overcome even the greatest of all of mankind’s negatives.

The fact is we are standing by that sand pile prior to the approaching storm. Are we going to shovel that last shovel of sand into a neighbor’s sand bag and wait for the possibility of another truckload of sand or shovel it into our own sandbag and go home. That’s when we find out if the zeal of the Good News is the actual spirit of our life.

Anthem: [“Panis Angelicus”](#) Agne G.& Katie Marshall

Offering*

We give thee but thine own, what-e’er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Father, we are in awe at the wonders and power of nature. Through it all we realize that life is renewed and continues bring us life sustaining gifts. We pray for those who have been stricken by nature’s fury. Give us the compassion to be able help and bring relief to them even if it may cause us to sacrifice. Through it all we realize how precious is the gift of life which you have given us. Grant us the wisdom to utilize this gifts so that those in need may find fulfillment in their lives.

The pandemic continues with people suffering and dying every day. Lead us through these days of fear and uncertainty. We continue to pray for those who have been overtaken by the corona virus and those who are caring for them in their desperate time. Help us be sensitive to all those who are suffering at this time and work towards alleviating their pain.

We pray for all whole need your comforting an healing presence especially Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Danny Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, the Johnson Family,

Robert Karner, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Kirk Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["God Be with You Till We Meet Again"](#)

*Offering to be sent to:
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