

Pentecost #14

9/6/2020

J.V.Trautwein

Celebrate (Introduction)

“Conflicts are a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus’ words in today’s gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation”

Opening Hymn: [“Holy God, We Praise Your Name”](#)

Psalm 119:33-40

Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe it to the end.

³⁴ Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.

³⁵ Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.

³⁶ Turn my heart to your decrees,
and not to selfish gain.

³⁷ Turn my eyes from looking at vanities;
give me life in your ways.

³⁸ Confirm to your servant your promise,
which is for those who fear you.

³⁹ Turn away the disgrace that I dread,
for your ordinances are good.

⁴⁰ See, I have longed for your precepts;
in your righteousness give me life.

Hymn of Praise: [“Rejoice, for Christ Is King”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Ezekiel 33:7-11](#)

2nd Reading: [Romans 13:8-14](#)

The Gospel: [Matthew 18::21-15-20](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart”](#)

The Message ([video](#))

To live this earthly life is to know all too well that more and even bigger is the measure of success. We learn this in the games we play as children as well as in the nurturing process of growing up, The more runs in baseball, baskets in basketball, touchdowns in football, goals in soccer and hockey, the more properties and money in monopoly, the more questions answered correctly in school, and even the more friends which may be claimed are seen as success. The more we have the better which translates into being successful. Yes, we learn from early on that more and bigger is better. In fact, we begin to learn that more and bigger is extremely important since that is how we are judged by others. That quickly becomes the standard of life.

Throughout the years of growing up we begin to be driven by this more and bigger syndrome. For instance, we learn that prestige among peers comes from the results of this syndrome. We learned the harsh reality of being judged, accepted, or excluded by wealth, race, and status. We see the results of more and bigger in what clothes we can buy, or what cars we can drive, or what homes and neighborhoods we live in.

Then we begin to understand the world in which we live is governed by the size and wealth of particular nations. We come to accept the fact that the bigger fish eats the littler fish. The bigger and more wealthy are the ones who dominate and control the lives of others. Eventually it becomes accepted that in order to continue to live the life of more and bigger, the taking from others becomes your birthright. We also come to believe that it's only through having more and more or being bigger and bigger that anything worthwhile or good can be produced. It is inherent that more and bigger is the best that life can create. Therefore, those who achieve that status have the right to be rewarded by all others.

This is the life into which we were born and to a large extent nurtured. This is a reality in our society and nation. To hear something like “good things can come in small packages” becomes mystifying and totally contrary to what we have been lead to believe. How can that be? To read in history that nations have been overthrown by just a handful of people, relatively speaking, is seen as absurd. No way! To know that great social revolutions have started in the minds of just one or two people is incomprehensible. Can't be! To learn that one or two people have been able to change the course of history seems out of the realm of reality. Not possible!

Yes, we are led to believe that a few, no less one, cannot make any difference in life because that's not how life is. Success in life is more and better. That is the only way things get done. That is what is important in life. This is further from the truth. Good things do come from small packages and have done so throughout history. Political and social revolutions have begun by just a few committed people. Individuals have changed the course of history, just look at Martin Luther or even the inventors like Thomas Edison. Or, we need only to hear the story

of 10 year old Addisyn Goss of Fenton, Michigan. In 2015 she first met her homeless grandfather. After hearing his many stories she was determine to do something to help the homeless. With the help of her family she placed donated toiletries, clothes, snacks, and blankets into bundles, she called Snuggle Sacks. She then delivered them to the homeless in Lansing and Flint, Michigan. At last report she is now delivering over 500 Snuggle Sacks each month. One ten year old girl's compassion has brought relief to scores of forgotten and homeless people.

As reported in Metalfloss.com, Addisyn remarked, "I like seeing how the Snuggle Sacks really help people," she says. "We have met lots of very nice people, and see them over and over again. They tell us how happy they are to get a new pair of socks, or the gloves, and how it helps them stay warm and safer. That makes us feel good. And, my brother and sister help me every day, so we are very close now."

This is exactly what Jesus was saying in our Gospel lesson "Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in Heaven." Notice he did not say or require more and bigger in order to gain God's attention. He didn't stipulate extensive numbers of people or vast amount of wealth. In fact, Jesus stated that God was not a bean counter in order to gain his attention - far from it. The numbers game is not the game of the kingdom of God despite the importance we may play on such games. Importance is not in the more and bigger syndrome. When you look at the totality of His ministry, Jesus spent most of His time with small groups of people especially among His disciples

Although Jesus at times gathered large crowds and worked miracles among them He also did even greater miracles in one to one meetings such as the meeting with the Samaritan women at the well. He never placed more emphasis upon his ministry in large gatherings over those of small groups or one to one relationships. He never played the numbers game that more and bigger is better. That is a value system which belongs to mankind alone and has no particular meaning within God's kingdom. This is emphasized in Jesus' words "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Remember also His words, "This I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." The life of Jesus constantly indicates the importance of every person.

What is important to God is not how many are gathered, the size of the building, the trappings within, or the paid staff, or the number of programs offered. They are the statistics of mankind's false perception of success. No it is those, no matter how few or great, who are gathered in His name which makes the difference. To be in His name is the key. To be in His name is to not only recognize that God is the Creator of the life we have been given, but it is to live this gift as the will of God. Being in His name is to be in love with not only the life given to us, and with the Creator of this life, but also to be in love with the Creation itself. This means the sharing of our lives through love with those whom God has created. To be in Him is truly to live a love affair motivated out of God's love and grace for us.

It is through living this love affair that even within the smallest gathering of people that God's presence is there with all of its power and promise. It is through this committed life that God works the greatest, most wondrous of miracles and acts of compassion. It doesn't take large numbers of people to do great things when they are gathered in the name of Jesus. Epiphany is a perfect example of this. Just look what you have done over the years. Epiphany is one of the smallest congregations in the synod, yet look at what you have accomplished when it comes to feeding the hungry. Epiphany, per person, out-gives churches with many times greater membership. Just look what we do when there is sickness or tragedy in and among our family, the love affair comes alive in acts of love and concern. By sponsoring the scouting and the recital programs we are making a difference in the lives of young people.

Are we without our shortcomings? No. But, that does not keep us from continuing to gather in His name and realize that God is ever present and ever alive among us with his love and forgiveness. Can we do better in reaching out so that others may experience this love affair of being in God's presence? We most certainly can. That is always our challenge. We need to be so committed and overjoyed about the Good News of Jesus' message that we want to share it so others may experience and live the same. This is not out of the motivation of more and bigger is better but purely out of the desire to have others experience "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." This is out of the motivation to live and share God's love.

Anthem: ["This Little Light of Mine"](#)

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

O Lord, in the midst of a world of uncertainty and turmoil we may lose sight of the importance of each individual and the contribution which they bring to life. Help us to encourage others as well as ourselves to give life and energy to help bring justice and peace to our troubled times. Give us the insight and wisdom to realize that we can make a difference when we live the love you have shown us through Jesus. Help us to become the solution and not part of the problem.

We continue to pray for all those in the medical profession and caregivers who are giving of their lives to help bring healing and comfort to the sick and dying. Guard and protect them and their families. Bring relief to those who are suffering economic hardships. Give our teacher and educators the wisdom to teach our children in trying conditions.

We pray for all who need your comforting and 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: ["Savior, Again to Your Dear Name"](#)

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Sunday Services are being held each Sunday in our outdoor chapel – 9:30 AM -10:30PM. Social distancing, and masks are required. Bring a lawn chair and dress appropriately for the weather.