

Pentecost #15

9-5-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Celebrate (Introduction)

“James tells us to stop showing favoritism in the assembly, treating the rich visitor with more honor than the poor one. Jesus himself seems to show partiality in his first response to the Syrophenician woman in today’s gospel. Was he testing her faith in saying Gentiles don’t deserve the goods meant for God’s Children? Or was he speaking out of his human worldview, but transcended those limits when she took him by surprise with her reply? Either way, the story tells us that God shows no partiality. Everyone who brings a need to Jesus is received with equal honor as a child and heir”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“God of Grace and God of Glory”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 146

“Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

²I will praise the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God while I have being.

³Put not your trust in princes,

in a son of man, in whom there is no help.

⁴When his breath departs he returns to his earth;

on that very day his plans perish.

⁵Happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob,

whose hope is in the Lord his God,

⁶who made heaven and earth,

the sea, and all that is in them;

who keeps faith for ever;

⁷who executes justice for the oppressed;

who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;

⁸the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;

the Lord loves the righteous.

⁹The Lord watches over the sojourners,

he upholds the widow and the fatherless;

but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

¹⁰The Lord will reign for ever,
thy God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the Lord!”

Hymn of Praise: [“Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Gracious God, throughout the ages you transform sickness into health and death into life. Open us to the power of your presence, and make us a people ready to proclaim your promises to the world, through Jesus Christ, our healer and Lord. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Isaiah 35:4-7a](#)

2nd Reading: [James 2:1-17](#)

The Gospel: [Mark 7:24-37](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“Let Justice Flow like Streams”](#)

The Message: ([Video Link](#))

Two weeks ago I took an emotional trip back 50 years when I visited and preached at my former congregation, Augsburg Lutheran Church. It was definitely a trip back to memory lane to an appointed time which had great influence upon my life. Prior to this time I had been an assistant pastor in two congregations during which I was mainly in charge of the educational and youth programs. But now with Augsburg I was pastor for everybody and everything. At that time, believe it or not, the congregation had a membership of around 150 people and was considered to be a small congregation. (Times have really changed.) Augsburg at that time was rather unique in the Lutheran church for it was almost all Afro American with only four white members beside my wife and myself. It was and is located in a 95% Afro community which is in northwest Baltimore and was economically mixed with a large middle class. By the way we lived next store in what was really a beautiful parsonage.

In going back that Sunday, I could recall almost all the members in my mind each with a special memory associated with them. But equally in my recollection were the events and experiences which happened during those eventful years in the late sixties and early seventies. Almost like today it was a very tumultuous times within the nation. Some have called them the rebellious years. It was a time which the anti-war movement of mainly young people holding sit-ins and demonstrations on college campuses as well as in the streets. At the same time the civil rights movement gain widespread involvement under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. It was during these years that the frustration within both movements were at a boiling point. Although there was support for the Vietnam protestors within the Afro- American community, what really found traction was the civil rights movement since it had experienced

generations of prejudice and inequality. To know the people in my congregation and in the community and to see and hear their stories affected me deeply for I was experiencing the pain of prejudice first hand. I realize in life's terms Maya Angelou's words, Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future, and renders the present inaccessible."

Fifty years ago, the tumultuous time culminated in the assassination of Dr. King in which the deep seated frustration boiled over into the riots which began to awaken the country to the injustices which continued to linger on. As I began preaching from that same pulpit that I stood in during these tumultuous years, I realized that although there have been changes during these fifty years, prejudice, inequality, and injustice still are deeply entrenched in our society and are affecting all of us.. In that regards during these fifty years not much has change. We are again in tumultuous times still living with the result of deep seated prejudice. Standing in that same pulpit time and looking at the faces of people I knew and loved and seeing in my mind the faces which have departed I realized one of the greatest gifts which they gave me - that was the lesson of being hopeful. When you think about how the Afro-American community has had to live and survive a life which in reality may seem filled with hopelessness, but yet they kept living in hope that things would change as captured in their rally song "We Shall Overcome" They are a living example that no matter what we face, hope is still alive. Even though we live in a nation deeply imbedded in prejudice, injustice, and inequality That Sunday I realized that having faith in a living hope Has the ability to bring about changes no matter how small or great they may be – hope is not dead.

This brings us to our Gospel lesson which demonstrates this. As we discussed last week Jesus had just turned the Jewish society up-side-down by denouncing the core of their legalistic religion. So revolutionary were His statements that he fled north into the land of the Gentile, the Syrian Territory of Tyre, in order to escape the wrath. It was in this foreign land that Jesus would again break the laws and traditions of the Jews. This time He broke the Jewish laws concerning talking with a Gentile, a non-Jew, a Syrophoenician woman. To have such an association with an unclean Gentile was forbidden. In actuality, in doing so, He was breaking down the barriers of prejudice and hatred for this event points directly to the extreme prejudice of the day.

It turned out to be somewhat of a tongue and cheek, or even battle of wits conversation. Both Jesus and the woman clearly understood it to be that way. She had sought Jesus to heal her daughter from a demon, most likely a mental disorder. Jesus first responded to her request in a most orthodox Jewish way, although a good Jews would not have even recognized the woman no less respond to her. The breaking of this precedent by answering her, signaled that what followed was tongue in cheek or even cynical. "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." In other words, such acts of God are only for His chosen people of Israel and not for the unclean Gentiles. What's the matter with you can't you understand that is the way it is. Be satisfied with your lot in life.

The woman, seeing Jesus statement for what it was replied in kind, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." She was sharp and not to be denied for she turned Jesus'

usage of dogs of the street to the cherished household dogs. In other words, there is even more left-over food to feed those beyond the House of Israel. She understood Jesus message that God's love has no limitation. With this response Jesus knew the depth of this woman's faith which went well beyond any prejudices. He responded, "For saying that, you may go – the demon has left your daughter."

With this incident, Jesus again turned the Jewish world up-side-down. He shattered the long-standing prejudice and hatred between Jew and Gentile. This brief encounter declared that God was Father of all people, Jew and Gentile, all races, all nationalities, and all stations in life. In God's love there is no room for prejudice or hate. He created everybody and therefore there is no distinction as to who can receive His love and forgiveness. His grace is for all who seek it. It is a message which reaches out with love and forgiveness, not with any prejudice, revenge, or hatred.

Does this mean that we should let people get by with indiscriminate acts of murder and destruction? I don't think so. But we must be extremely careful not to react blindly in an indiscriminate way. This may just be no better than the original perpetrators for innocent lives may be at stake and we become the perpetrators of acts of prejudice and hatred.

This is not the Gospel of Jesus. It is not why God sent His Son to us. He was sent to break through these human pitfalls which create pain and suffering. This is why He showed us his overwhelming love through the cross and is why He clearly told us what we must do to inherit this abundant love for ourselves. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...(and) You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

As we remember 9/11 this week, it will be so easy to remember the tragedy of pain, suffering, and death as well as the prejudice and hatred which was the motivation behind the terrorists. But let us never let that divert our attention from those who selflessly gave their lives in order to help save the lives of others. That is the goodness and love which lies within each of us which must continually shine forth from our personal and collective lives as a society and nation. It is goodness and love which will help us through these troubling times in which prejudice, hatred, and revenge is so prevalent. Unless we as individuals examine who we are and how we respond to and live with others in light of God's love, the world around us will continue to polarize and continue to create and even promote human suffering. There is no room for prejudice in God's love. Jesus and the Syrophenician woman point us in the right direction for we are all God's children who experience the basic desire in life to be treated equally as a child of God. This is the hope which we must live in order to make a difference.

Anthem: ["We Shall Overcome" The Morehouse College Glee Club](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

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 of all life, with the ending of our traditional summer our children and young people are beginning another year of school and college. During this time of the pandemic guard and protect them as well as their teachers and school staff from the dangers of this potential life threatening virus. Regardless of the inconveniences which they may experience, may they have a productive year in learning. With the virus again surging may we see that our own worst enemy just be ourselves. Open our lives to see the reality of our circumstance beyond politics and misconceived ideologies. After a week of devastating storms, floods, earthquakes, and wild fires, we pray for those who have been so directly affected. May we be a helping hand in all their recovery endeavors.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Charles Larsen, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family,, Della , Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack,
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 comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life"](#)

Announcements

Services will be outdoors unless inclement weather conditions force us indoors. Face masks and social distancing outdoors are not required. An email will be sent late Saturday afternoons stating whether indoors or outdoors.

*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
<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291