

July 15, 2018

Prayer

May the words of my mouth be meditations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Sermon

I know you're probably just waiting with baited breath for me to preach on the beheading of John. I hate to disappoint you but I'm not going to preach on the beheading of John. I am however, going to preach on the epistle for today. Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus, the church that he started. And he is ... This is the very first part of the letter. He's greeting the people but he's also reminding them who they are. And who they are as citizens of God's kingdom. And who they are as Christ's brothers and sisters, as God's adopted children. It is a small, just a few verses. But it is a reminder to them as they are struggling a little bit to understand exactly who they are as the church. What they are to be about in the world. In some of the rest of his letter, it answers questions that they have about being the church. And about how they are to move forward as the body of Christ in the world.

As I read that I thought you know maybe it's a good time to have a reminder of who we are as the church. A reminder of what we are about. Paul tells the church in Ephesus to remember that they have been forgiven their sins. And that is important for us to remember. That as we are living out our lives, that we first have been forgiven. The sins that we have committed, the sins that we will commit. We have the promise of God's forgiveness. That God will not allow those sins to stand in the way of the relationship between us and God.

And that we are to live in that not only to ourselves, but we are to proclaim that. We are called to share with the world that the creator of all things loves his creation. And wants relationship with all of his creation. Certainly, with all of humanity.

And we are given this as a gift. You have received this gospel, this good news that you are acceptable in the eyes of God. God loves you. God created you. God has given his son, has given himself so that the rightful punishment for sin could be satisfied. So that you and I can be in relationship with God through Christ.

That's the good news. That's the gospel. That's the gift that is given. And we receive that gift as we are baptized. As we either come as adults and say I wish to be a part of this community. I wish to receive the gift of forgiveness of my sins. I wish to receive the gift of being the adopted child of God. And as we are baptized either as adults or as children with our parents and godparents making those same claims. There's the desire to have this child be in relationship with God. To have the sins that may be committed forgiven. And God's response to that is I receive you. I accept you. I join with you. I am in relationship with you.

The Holy Spirit, part of the very essence of God will dwell with you. And it is that essence, that Holy Spirit that you need to claim and to listen to and to be open to as we live out our life. We receive the gift and then we are asked to live out our lives proclaiming that truth and living out that truth. That we are forgiven sinners. That we are adopted children of God. That we are part of that community called the church. That community that is the kingdom of God here and now. And we are journeying towards the fullness of that kingdom as we leave this world and come into the fullness of God's kingdom.

That is who we are. That is what we are about. But it takes a conscious effort to live out that life. It takes us being intentional about living our lives as God's children and relating to the world and the people around us. With that understanding that I have been received as God's child. The other person may or may not have been. But we are to see them, to relate to them. To acknowledge them as beloved children of God and share with them the gospel. Share with them our understanding of the change that is taking place in us as we live our lives as members of God's kingdom. And to be intentional about that is a day-to-day response. And I would just like to make a couple suggestions about how we can make that more real and how we can make that a bit more intentional in the living out of our lives.

Now I don't know about you, but I have a routine in the morning. First and foremost is that cup of coffee. I don't care what else is going on. You know, maybe if the house is on fire but I want my cup of coffee. It's a quiet time. Maybe one of the dogs will get out of bed with me at 5:30-5:45 when I get up. Most of the time they don't. So, I have that time of quiet. That's just my routine. It's something that I need.

Something else that I need, and I think we all need as part of that morning routine as we start the day. As we look forward to what's coming up in our day is to acknowledge that relationship with God. To actually come to God in prayer. To give thanks for the night that has passed and for the rest that we have received. To lift up to God the day that is ahead and ask God to be a part of it. How we see it. How we respond to it. How we live out that day. The things that we know that are coming. But also, the things that we don't know that we're going to have deal with.

It is a time to remember in prayer those people ... maybe I get it more than you do because I wear the collar. But I often get people asking me

would you keep this, or me, or this person, or that person in your prayers. And if you are like me the response is of course I will do that. I would be happy to do that. Well it's good to say that, it's better to do it. To lift up that list of people in your prayers. Those who are sick. Those who are going through difficult times. Those who just want to be remembered in your prayers. If you have made that commitment to them. If you have told them, yes, I will keep you in my prayers. Then set a time for prayer and remember them. Offer their concerns up to God.

It's not just about me and my concerns. About what's going on in my life. Although those are important. But also, those who have come to you. Who have acknowledged you as a person of faith. Who has acknowledged you as a person who is part of the kingdom of God and a child of God. And they value you and your prayers. So, when we say yes, I'll keep you in my prayers. Then keep them in your prayers. Make a time. Make it part of the routine. And if you can do that in the start of the day, then that sets it up for the rest of the day to live that out.

You know as you're going through your day. Ask God to be helpful. To be mindful of the people around you. And the situations that are going on. Sometimes we get caught up in the busyness of our lives. We have this to do. We have that place to go. We have these things that are going on and sometimes we don't acknowledge the people who come into our lives that day. Who need our attention just as much as all these other things. Ask God to help you to see and to hear that. Ask God to give you the grace to respond to their needs as you are going through the day. Because that is part of what it is to be citizens of God's kingdom.

To hear. To know. To relate. These are all things that we are called to do as the body of Christ. One of the things that we hear so often in the Epistles. That we are called to be the body of Christ. The presence of

Christ in the world. Whether the person acknowledges God or Christ or does it in the same way that we do or not. We are called to present the love of God and the love of Christ as best we can to the people around us. It's important for us to remember that even though we get into ... We get frustrated. We get ... Sometimes we get angry. You know Jesus doesn't say don't get angry. Matter of fact, he says the opposite. Get angry but do not sin. Make sure that your response is measured. Remember that your response should be from what is exactly taken place and not for frustrations that have come earlier in the day.

How many times have we, have I been frustrated or upset about something that has happened and then someone else comes into my area and I respond less kindly than I should. Whether that be with family or just the next person who comes into my office or whatever. We need to make sure that we are so in relationship with God that we can let go of the one so that we can relate to the other. And we can ask God to help us be aware. Ask God to help us deal with feelings from one situation, so they don't carry over into the other as we are dealing with family or friends or a completely different situation.

I know it's so easy when I had my younger son to be frustrated with some things that have gone on at church. I know that you don't think anything frustrating ever happens at church but sometimes it does. And sometimes you know you get something from your child who knows how to push every single button and hit every nerve that you have. And I responded in ways that had I not been having the day that I had, I would have responded differently. We need to be aware of that. And we need to be willing and able to ask for their forgiveness. To say that we're sorry. To say that it wasn't you, there were other things going on. I handled it poorly and ask them for their forgiveness. We want them to learn to forgive others, they need to see it in us. So that they can

understand what it is to be asked for forgiveness. And what it means to either withhold that or to offer that.

We are the church. We are adopted children of God. We have accepted that gift. We are called to live it out. That takes work. Our relationship with God takes intentionality. To be in the presence of God. To listen to what God says to us. To take time to make sure that God is a part of the situations of our lives so that we can handle them in productive ways. Because every situation is an opportunity. An opportunity to reflect the love of God or to show our own sinfulness. It is for us to make it more an opportunity of sharing God's love. Allowing God to lead more fully in our lives. And in that way, we are living out what it is to be the church. What it is to be citizens of God's kingdom. And what it is to be God's children.

Gregory Hein – Rector

Renee' Evans – Transcriptionist