

November 13, 2016

Time of Opportunities to Meet Needs

PRAYER

May the words of my mouth be mediations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. AMEN

SERMON

In the fall of each year, we close in on the end of the church year. We have one more Sunday in the season of ordinary time or Pentecost. And then in two weeks from today we will begin the new church year. We will begin the season of advent. That time of anticipation and preparation for the celebration of the coming of the Messiah. But in the end of ordinary time, Pentecost, we always close with Jesus speaking about the end times. And about the things that will take place. Normally, that's difficult enough and interesting enough to try to preach on. After a contentious campaign and election year and election, the few days that have passed since it's taken on some new meaning to some people. Some friends of mine believe that the end is coming and is here. Because of the election that took place. Others feel that salvation has come. I would ask you not to feel either way.

We live in a wonderful country where we have the opportunity to voice our opinions without fear of great retribution. We have the opportunity to vote for our leaders and representatives and that right that we cling to for ourselves, we also cling to for others who think differently. This is not a time for looking at end times. This is a time to look at opportunities. When Jesus was talking to his disciples about what was going to take place and the fact that they were going to be persecuted that death might come to them. He didn't say oh lament be sad. He said this is an opportunity. This is an opportunity to state your faith and not to prepare ahead of time. But to allow the Spirit of God that is a part of you to speak to your time, speak to your faith, speak to who you are as a follower of Jesus Christ. And that same encouragement that he gave to his disciples, I believe is the very encouragement we need to hear now.

We are not in a time of lamentation, we are in a time of opportunity. We are in a time when we must stand up for what we believe. Not just as Americans, more importantly as Christians. To speak out, to speak up. This is not a time for violent protests. It's not a time for simplistic labels of liberal and conservative. That's not what we're about. I'm assuming that you're here today not just so you can vote in the annual meeting. Which is important, however. But because you have a deep embodied faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

That you made promises in your baptism if you were an adult when you were baptized, or in your confirmation if you were confirmed in the Episcopal church, or if you have attended a baptism or attended a confirmation where you were asked to renew your baptismal covenant. You made promises, you were asked questions about how you would live your life. How you would live it in relationship to God, and what you believe in God. And how you will choose to live your life in relationship to one another. And one of the most important and profound parts of our baptismal covenant is that we respect the dignity of every human being. Not limited, every human being. To accept that some will agree with you and some will disagree with you. That some will go much further on one side or the

other. And that's okay. If God gives them that right, if God gives us that right, do we not in our baptismal covenant promise, promise to honor it in others.

We are beginning a new church year, we have our annual meeting. That thing that takes place where we take a look at where we have been. And this church has done amazing things over the last ten years that I've been here I know and I know before that but certainly over the last year. We have borne witness to the grace of God, and the abundance with which God has blessed us. We have shared that with people we don't know. We didn't ask their politics, we didn't ask what they were about. We only knew that there was need, a need for clean and drinkable water. And we gave of ourselves so that that need as great as it is, just one little well will make a difference. And we did that. We are aware of our community and the needs of our community.

In the Epistle for this morning, 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, Paul doesn't say those that are unable to work should not eat. He says those that are unwilling to work should not eat. We have people in our community, not because they are unwilling but because they are unable. They will go hungry if not for the programs of Sharing and Caring that we support. With food, every week, every week. You bring food that is part of your offering to God, part of your honoring and blessing God with the blessings that you have been given. Sharing that and it comes up at the offertory every Sunday and we take it to be given to those in need.

One Saturday a month our volunteers help take meals to those who simply are not able to feed their families enough. We do that regularly, we are part of that program. We are part of that caring community that looks beyond ourselves. And you should be proud of that. We offer to our community a touchpoint of faith, a place to come and know that they will encounter God for a moment. That's what we are about. And it takes leadership and we have had wonderful leadership in this parish. The lay leadership of the vestry, those who have committed themselves to the different committees here at St. Jude's have helped lead this church one that truly is a family. There's a feeling of family, of being together, of knowing that we can depend on one another in the most blessed of times and in the most difficult of times.

And like families, not everyone of us get along together. Maybe not as quite we like to or should, but it doesn't get in the way of looking out, reaching in to one another, embracing one another. Taking care of the needs that come up. To address with prayer and presence those needs that we see in our own community. And to reach out beyond our walls, beyond our family to include others to the blessings and abundance that we have received.

And just as this is a time of opportunity for our nation, it is a time of opportunity for our church as well. As we continue to give of ourselves and to include others. And to reach out to the needs and to be aware of what's going on. And how we can be a part. And it will be the leadership that is elected, and the continuing leadership that will help move that forward. That will help us to know and understand the best ways to reach into a community. A diverse community. And to meet needs.

It's all about looking forward. Yes, we can celebrate what we have accomplished and that's part of what the annual meeting is about too. And maybe we didn't do everything perfectly. That means that there is room for improvement. Means that there is room to reach in better, to reach out better, and to reach towards God better. We are a community, family. We made a commitment. A commitment of loving

God, of loving one another, to fight for justice and mercy. To honor the integrity of every human being. That is what we are about, that is what we will aim for in the coming year, and in the coming years.

It is because we have been blessed by a gracious God who has come to us, who has loved us, and who has offered us opportunity. To be citizens of God's kingdom. And to bring God's kingdom to bear in our world. May we move forward not in fear, not in lamentation, but with a sense of opportunity. With a sense of the presence of God, with an understanding of the Holy Spirit leading, and guiding, and strengthening, and enabling us to make a difference in this community. In our wider community, and in the world.