

August 3, 2014

Scripture Lessons ~

Genesis 32:22-31

Matthew 18:1-5

Communion Meditation

Like a Child

Reflecting on the Gospel lesson for today, my thought was, that you think if Jesus was going to put somebody in the midst of a gathering of his closest twelve disciples as an example of what it means to be a person of deep faith and to be a spirit filled leader he would make a better choice than a little child. You would think he would pick maybe another Abraham or Noah or Moses or Jacob or King David and not a little child. A person not quite fully developed or a person not yet mature or a person who could be seen as vulnerable, and simple and helpless and not really that important in the larger world especially in the ancient world.

But, you know Jesus did choose a small child. And his choice was placed in the context with familiar words which was said in response to a familiar disagreement amongst his disciples. The disagreement about who among them was the greatest. You know we get into these kinds of disputes, disagreements, frustrations around our churches and around our organizations of which we are a part of or even in our political process about who is the greatest. Perhaps who is really in charge of this committee or that committee or who gets to decide what is done with this or that event or who is in charge of this or that worship service. Who is the decision maker when it comes to sending this chunk of money or that chunk of money? It comes off to me in this way, like who gets to decide whether to move that deck chair from one place to another on the sinking Titanic. That is what it comes off to me as being. In another words it comes off pretty well meaningless because in the long run if you win, what difference does it make? The damage is done and the ship is going down. And yet we as Christian people leave churches and organization and political entities and continue to peruse these kinds of arguments; these kinds of disputes and these kinds of discussions, back and forth until at least in the church world we destroy our congregations drive good and faithful people far away and render ourselves useless as instruments of God's peace in the world. I said this before and I am going to say it again some Christian people love to whip of the fear that somehow the government or Satan or Atheists are going to be death of our faith when in reality we do a pretty good job of reaping havoc with our own faith by ourselves. And I put pastor is that as well.

What then did Jesus see as a remedy in this very human response of our very human nature? For as I mentioned before, something totally unexpected, something really quite scandalous, something that some would see as below their

dignity to even consider. He choose a simple, helpless, innocent small child and set him in the midst of them and said these words, "Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of God and whoever welcomes one such child welcomes me." What did Jesus mean by these words? Well simply that only as we embrace our faith, not in a childish but in a childlike way we will be the people of faith; we will be the spirit filled leaders as Jesus desperately needs us to be in the world today. And what does it mean to embrace our faith in this childlike way but to embrace simply, embrace it lovingly, to embrace innocently, to embrace without concern for who is first or who is last but instead for who we can help around us, who we can love and how we can accomplish these things in the larger world around us working together; that is the magic words working together.

The book of James speaks pretty bluntly about these concerns in many ways for as we get further along in life as we get older that we get concerned with getting ahead of others and sometimes in the process beating them down with a great deal of cynicism and sometimes with a great deal of cruelty as well. James reminds us that the tongue is a fire in this process. It is not like the fiery tongues at Pentecost that gave the disciples confidence and directions in the book of Acts but like a kind of insidious poisonous snake that strikes and destroys the entire body. In this case the body of Christ and the members thereof, strife that hurts, strife with fears, strife with a great deal of negativity. Now thinking in more human terms again does that mean we are never going to blow off about people in situations that have angered us and frustrated us with trusted friends and family members, of course we are going to blow off that is what is our human safety value is that is what we have family and friends because sometimes we need to blow off. We need comfort. We need encouragement but what it does mean we will not we will not use our tongue to hurt. We will not use our tongue to destroy others, not only to their faces but behind their back as well

So what should our hearts be speaking to then as we sort of embrace the new covenant in Jesus blood today as we gather around our Communion Table as we celebrate Holy Communion together. I believe Jesus would want our hearts to tell us that tongues were made for one purpose, for praising. Our tongues were made for giving words of support. Our tongues were made for complimenting and encouraging others along the struggles that life brings. That only as we put the true needs of others ahead of our own wants and our own desires that we can really be the people of faith; can we really be the spirit filled leaders that Jesus wants us to be. I encourage you then to hear the words of Jesus and the Gospel today to carry them with you during the course of the week
And Together We Say AMEN