

August 31 2014

**Scripture Lessons ~**

Psalms 66, 67

Romans 12:9-21

Matthew 16:21-28

**Sermon**            *Ham and Eggs*

Well, the story is told of a hen and a hog who were traveling together down a road and past a church, that displayed the subject for that coming Sunday's sermon was on the board. "How Can We Help The Poor"? How can we help the poor? After a moment's reflection the hen ventured a guess, "I know exactly what we can do. We can give the poor a ham and eggs breakfast". Well, the hog looked a little chagrined at that. He said. "That is easy for you to say, because for you just a contribution but for me that is going to take a total commitment"

Now loving another person often does mean making great sacrifices for that person. In other words if we really care about someone or some group of people enough, as the hog was at least called upon to do, we would be more than willing out of love for them to give up whatever is necessary to ensure of their well being is taken care of even if we have no guarantee of getting anything in return. More often or not, parents and those of you who are parents are called upon constantly making such sacrifices for your children. Most of the time with no idea of return on their investment either.

A story in point, my cousin loves to tell this story about her husband who brought a traveling salesman home for pork chops one night. Her husband owned a little dime store and would often bring sales people home for dinner only on this occasion instead of calling his wife at the proper time in the early afternoon warn her about the guest; this time he only called at five thirty and he expected the dinner to be ready at six thirty. Most of you would tell him to take a hike. Pork chops for the menu for the evening and since there weren't enough and there wasn't time to go to the store for more, my cousin cut the ones that she had into little tiny pieces and then she reserved this tiny little piece of bone for herself. She breaded everything really heavily and she hoped the three children would be true to form as usual and not eat too much meat for dinner. Well. The salesman arrived with my cousin's husband at the appointed time and everybody was served the little breaded pork chops as planned. My cousin sat and she picked at her bone with her knife and fork to just make a good show. The two boys, true to form only ate a small amount of meat but then there was little Alice. Not our little Alice but another little Alice, their little five year old daughter. Alice was not about to

cooperate. She usually didn't like meat and didn't even eat meat at all but that night of all nights right in front of the salesman she threw a tantrum because she wanted another piece of meat and there was none left.

This whole idea of sacrifice for the sake of others is not something that Jesus disciples could readily accept. It is not something that we can readily accept sometimes either. Because like the disciples most of the time we have no problems saying in our hearts or even out loud that Jesus is the very cornerstone of our faith. But the kind of Jesus that we sometimes choose does not match the kind of Jesus that our Lord chose to be during the course of his life. You know as well as I do there are a lot of TV evangelists and church groups who preach what I would call Prosperity Gospel of Jesus. A Jesus whose main emphasis is on what I can get out of my faith or instead of putting something into my faith. Now granted none of us have completely pure motives in the pursuit of our faith we all know that; we can't always completely purify, why we do the things that we do. We all want to enjoy the eternal communion with God during the course of the next life. We all would like to have a part in God's presence spiritual blessings. We all want to enjoy some measure of happiness and security in the life that we are living now but unfortunately for many of us, that rich young ruler of the Gospels included, Jesus emphasized in his life and in his ministry that what we get out of our faith is not nearly so important as to what we put into our faith as what we give to our life of faith. In fact he went so far as to disciples, the fact he went so far as to tell the disciples some unsettling things. In this gospel lesson from Matthew 16, that he would have to give up his own life in order that they might have eternal communion with God and not only that he went a step further and said that if they would follow him they also would have to give up something of themselves for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

In John's Gospel, John the Baptist, called Jesus something, somewhat familiar and yet somehow removed from us in the present day, he called Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world; the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. At least in Jesus time after that sacrificial system in which he took part in the temple. If that made me wonder as I thought about what Jesus had to say. Jesus I think is saying in this passage that he is the great Lamb of God, does that make us somehow the smaller lambs of God who are called upon to support Jesus with our gifts in his path. Support for Jesus with our gifts in Jesus person.

Couple days ago I had a chance to go home to Colfax I had some church business I needed to take care of but I had a chance to walk around the streets and reminisce my childhood and my growing up years and as I thought about us using our lives in the ways that Jesus is speaking of; sharing our gifts to the fullest potential as we can muster as we take this walk of faith through life, I was taken

back to my junior year in high school and the tragedy loss of two of my classmates in alcohol-related accidents. One of friends died in a drowning in that senior year. In the other in my junior year in an automobile accident this boy and girl were in the flower of life with each with so many gifts and so much potential to offer to the world; and that gift and that potential was smashed that gift and that potential was wasted in the process of these accidents. So as I reflect on that I would encourage each of us not to squander the gift that God has given to us in what I would call are trivial pursuits because life is too short for that. But instead I encourage you to look to the example of Jesus. Jesus the great lamb of God and somehow to live your life in a smaller and yet varied important lamb of God in God's sight prepared to allow yourself to die just a little bit in order to give a portion of your life when called upon in service to God and those around you. I think your life will be much more fulfilled if that is something that you are able to do. And together we say AMEN