



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 1, 2017

Jesus is Lord

Matthew 21:23-32

As is custom...a moment in time...for silence...for focus...for clarity in hearing the Gospel proclaimed for each of us and for the mission we share in this place...(silence for a time)...in the name of Jesus...let it be!

I left early on Friday to be on time for a concert, The National Lutheran Choir...knowing that I risked traffic going into Seattle around 3 o'clock...it was my goal to stop at a bookstore, or two...to find my way to Capitol Hill...to troll for a place to park...knowing that it would take block circling minutes to land a space...an hour later I scored, no limits...could park as long as I needed...

Quick bite to eat...2 mile walk to Saint Mark's Cathedral...heavy duty construction zone...an hour and some early for the National Lutheran Choir Concert...approached the parking lot and heard voices...(now don't get concerned, I don't often hear voices)...but the singing sounds of praise permeated the walls as if "angels" were singing. It was, as they say, "surreal."

In an Mp3 age of streaming and self-isolating ear buds, music permeated the air. I stood silent and barely making out the words I heard..."Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, yesterday,---today and forever."

Doors opened at 6:30 and by concert start an hour later, the cathedral was full and they were putting up chairs---imagine it...2017...adding chairs for a Lutheran event that was not held on Christmas or Easter☺

Songs of praise, hymns of conviction, and the powerful message of witness that "Jesus is Lord." Yet, this day changing moment of hope left me wondering a bit...no judgment here...what would it have been like had this worship space included a median age of 35...how do we, who love and serve the Lord Jesus, reach those who too would have been moved to re-formation to Jesus' own at their best, singing the praises of God in the midst of a world filled with darkness, challenge, those in need of the servant mission of those who are called "Christian"?

"Mission." Not a new word. "Assessment." Review as in a "Gospel Physical." "Profile Survey." As in "points of view." Not meant to be a standardized test. As in "pass/fail."

These past three weeks, the Gospel readings have been parables, "earthly stories with heavenly meaning" that have been about mission, the launch of those who would become the mission of Jesus and witnesses even to us; we are the "assessment" that faithfulness works.

Recall that there is one point in each as Jesus prepares His own for transition when they become THE mission as Jesus died, is raised and ascends to the Heavenly Father.

First Week: A story of the king who settled accounts and who gave total forgiveness to a servant (debt forgiven) who failed to do the same to one

Fellow servant who owed him but a wee bit. *The point is about the nature of TOTAL forgiveness. Forgive as you have been forgiven!* {This parable is taught just after Jesus speaks of His death and resurrection!}

Last Week: A story about a householder who seeks laborers several times and at the end of the day pays each the same amount following which grumbling occurred that some had worked the longest and could not believe that those who had worked much less got the same pay out. *The point is about REDEMPTION equal to all from the first covenant to Abraham and Sarah to the newest person who comes to know Jesus and His love.* {This parable is taught just BEFORE Jesus speaks yet one more time about His death and resurrection, adding the details of being “mocked and scourged.”}

Then, this week, today, after his Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem, having cleansed the Temple a second time, Jesus authority is questioned---“What authority do you claim and where does it come from?” A short verbal duel leaving the chief priests and elder wondering what happened and a story is told about a man with two sons.

† Father --- God asks Son to go to work. Kid says “NO.”

† Spoiler alert: he later did!

† Father – God asks other son to go to work. Kids says “You bet. Right away.”

† Spoiler alert 2: he didn’t!

† And the question to those who asked: “Which of the two did the will of the father?”

† Seems “they/the chief priests and elders” began to get it.

The point: Those who first believed and trusted the covenant of God to Israel; those who built generations of life with God on that trust and kept faithful Temple remembrance and worship, did not heed the call of John the Baptist to turn to the fulfillment in Jesus.

Net result? Among those who came heart to heart to the words of Jesus to repent and believe included, take a deep breath, “tax collectors and prostitutes.” And even when the temple authorities saw the transformation did not repent and trust. Would not confess that “Jesus is Lord.” It is as if Jesus asked “What’s keeping you from a missional thrust forward in my name?”

For each of us, there are those moments when hearts and lives are renewed. It happens for me when I worship in with the expectation that God will touch my life in a way that confirms that Jesus is my Savior and Lord and I am never alone. Like today at Word and Table!

This Gospel story speaks of the call of the Church today: there is a demand to be in the pathways of renewals in righteousness. Yet, we can never do that on our own, but through the power for renewal that comes through sorrow for sin, repentance, and moving on into the world. With the words “OK, I/WE will go!” And believing in the One who summarized His mission with the final verse of Matthew’s Gospel “teaching (us) to keep all that I have taught and look ‘I am and with you all the days, right up to the end of history.’”

I left the concert early, late, long walk. Song still leaking from the cathedral wall. In the late evening Friday walk down Broadway. And the miracle of song and re-formation struck me as an opportunity to see my life, our life as one of risking in confident trust to keep on in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ: Yesterday, Today and Forever.

At the Welcome, Pastor Paul Hoffman shared that the offering for the night would be equally divided between Compass Housing Alliance and Imagine Housing. Rick Steves agreed to match it up to \$20,000.

When I reached home...I thought about the fruits of life in Jesus. Humble Service which looks forward knowing that the Holy Spirit always finds the place for us, for each of us, to plant our feet on earth and then to sow the seed of the Word of God which is Jesus.

The call is ours, beloved, each of us, under the Sign of the Cross (As I love to remind!). I am thinking of forward thrust mission in this place. "So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And may our words be "OK, I will go; and then GO!" Amen!