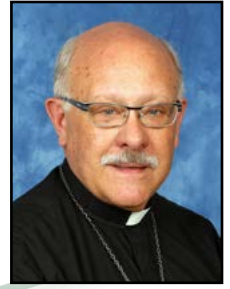




Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



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

Fifth Sunday of Easter

April 29, 2018

What Does It Mean to Abide?

John 15:1-8

It was a lead article in the TheWall Street Journal (March 31/April 1, 2018) that caught my attention in a second. The headline: The Easter Effect. The writer posed this question: "How did a ragtag band of nobodies become such a dominant force?"

A question that seems to intrigue, each year, around Easter. Especially in times when the reporting is not so good.

The recent Gallup Poll report left Washington tied with Alaska as the 6th state having the highest number of adults who claim to not be religious (47% and the largest since the polling began in 2008) and the Pew Forum work on national worship service attendance at least once a week leaves our state at number 34 and at 32 for those who pray frequently.

So when the question is asked, "Where is the mission field today?" It begins at the parking lot! Jesus spoke to that in John; Philip the Deacon model the power of the way that the Gospel spread one person at a time.

Jesus teaches that mission begins with "abiding." The image is one of growth---vine and branches. The seed illustration adds a powerful dimension from small to lush and strong.

ABIDING IN THE WORD: Did you catch it? "You have already been cleansed by the word I have spoken to you." All of His teachings! So, "Abide in me as I abide in you."

"Abide" means TO BEAR PATIENTLY, TO WITHSTAND, TO AWAIT, TO ACCEPT WITHOUT OBJECTIONS, TO REMAIN STABLE AND FIXED. TO CONTINUE, TO SOJOURN, DWELL, STICK AROUND...or, in a phrase "to walk your talk." And, thereby, from abiding in the Word, to bear fruit!

Dare I ask? How much time do you, do we, spend in the Word of God, Jesus, through the Word of God we believe to be the source and foundation of our lives becoming discipleFit?

ABIDING IN THE WORD LEADS TO ABIDING IN THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST. The fruit that the growth of the Gospel blossoms into each day.

Listen. Jesus says 'I, I am the real Root of the Matter, and my Father is the Orchardist.' And from the Tree of the Cross planted on Calvary, shoots go out into all the world and build a community of those

whose hearts are rooted in that Word of life learning to walk into the ways of love---the work we do by the power of the Holy Spirit---meeting the broken, the homeless with housing, the hungry with food, and being an ever safe refuge and place for those who come to abide with us at Saint Andrew's.

Dare I ask? Did you hear it? "Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another...God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them...casts out fear! **In relationships we are held and hold one another forever!**

Abiding=Growing=In Christ we serve. By first, sharing the good news of Jesus. A little like Philip... catch the path?

Led by "an angel of the Lord." He got up and went, led by the Spirit. Engaged in conversation around the Word/Isaiah! And Shared the good news about Jesus.

Look what happened! Abiding led to seed sowing, rapid growth toward discipleship. "And as they were going along the road, they came to some water...'Look, here is water." Philip baptized him, was led away by the Spirit of the Lord to be about mission. And the newborn in Christ "went on his way rejoicing."

Beloved, we are called by Jesus to Christ, led by the Spirit in missional-relationship (StewardSHIP, ServiceSHIP, FellowSHIP, RelationSHIP, MissionSHIP) which is rooted and fed in one place WORSHIP! That we might grow and GO!

Dare I ask? How are you abiding in Christ? And where is YOUR/OUR place in mission today in the land where folks may have forgotten God, but God has not forgotten them, and we are the bridge for we are the fruit of that "ragtag band of nobodies" who trust and knew that Christ had been raised from the dead and that they had lives of purpose and meaning forever.

The writer in The Wall Street Journal invites us to take "stock" {Pun intended!} in living resurrection--the first Christians, the nobodies embraced a Risen Lord, first known as a simple Rabbi, who died an agonizing death on a Roman Cross. And when they were asked why they were Christians, they gave a straightforward answer: because Jesus was raised from the dead!

We are those who live that truth in the 21st Century. Our time is God's time, our history is leverage from Cross and Empty Tomb. So we love as those who know love; forgive as those forgiven; feed the hungry, house the unsheltered, serve in a community recently referred to as the "Ground Zero of Human Services." But, most of all have learned to love the Lord and to be Him wherever the Spirit leads us as we abide in Christ!

Let's call it the Easter Effect: The joy of people who are convinced, with a single will, that in Christ we are super-abundantly called to witness that meaning to life comes when the fear of death is erased and that we truly have something to share which can and must be changing the world.

The sending words are clear: "You are the Body of Christ in the world. **Go...in peace...and live** His life." Blessed ABIDING! Amen.