



## Pastor Gwen's Message "Change"

Sunday September 27, 2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Fear is running rampant in our country. Fear of COVID-19 probably tops the list. And with that comes fear of death, fear of being really sick or fear of financial ruin. Also, many today are fearful of the racial and social unrest over injustices in our country. Some might be afraid of the "other party" winning the election. So, what are you afraid of? Any or all of the above? And why do you fear?

Part of the reason people fear things is because they are unknown. Part of the reason people fear things is because we all like things the way they are. (mostly) Another part of the reason people fear things is because we all dislike change! (I see you nodding your heads.)

I think we can all agree that we like things, for the most part, the way they are. Even if things are not great right now, we know what we have and we have learned how to deal with it. Change means things might get worse and we certainly don't want that. Change means things will somehow be different than what we are accustomed to.

Well, Covid 19 has certainly changed the way we shop, where or if we go out to dinner. Not to mention that we are asked to socially distance ourselves from one another and wear a mask. Yikes. Life does look different in 2020. And we don't like it. We want our old life back. Some of us are even a little angry, or at least a bit miffed with God for letting Covid 19 rear it's ugly head. That folks is a natural feeling. It is all right to tell God you are mad at this

pandemic. God knows we are human. After all, he made us the way we are, human. And God is a compassionate God and can handle your angry words.

In our Gospel lesson for today the authority of Jesus is challenged. Why? Because He was not doing things the way the chief priests and elders expected it. He had authority from a higher power. Jesus' authority came from His Father and was not of human origin. Wow, that was a big change for the religious leaders to swallow.

But we should realize that Jesus' presence on earth brought change, change that the elders did not want and change that we sometimes don't like either. But, the one constant thing in this life is change. And it is the one constant thing about God's interaction with humanity; it always brings change.

Jesus was not the King that the Israelites, the Jews were looking for. They wanted more of a King David figure. But Jesus was not interested in the Glory of being a king. He did not come as a warrior, but rather as a healer. Jesus loved people and interacted with them on their level. He touched many people, even the lowly, the lepers and even women. He taught with stories, not by using the old rules of the Torah. Jesus talked about new commandments and covenants. He even said that the Kingdom of Heaven was near. He told of His death at the hands of the religious authorities and how He would rise again from the dead. All of this was difficult to understand, because it was not the way it always was. Change and lots of it, you bet!

COVID-19 has changed the way we do our worship. Here at CTS when we were ordered to stay at home, I recorded sermons and posted them to Facebook. Or you could read my sermons on our church website. Then we ventured out to do drive through communion after watching a Facebook post that included the Words of Institution. Now we are together, sitting our 6 feet apart, still not able to sing praise to God while wearing our masks. Talk about a lot of change in 7 months.

And an interesting thing about God is that change is always a part of the program and we more often than not, do not have any idea of what change might look like. Realize that the chief priests and elders in today's Gospel lesson were not bad people. They were resisting change, as Jesus did not look like the Messiah they were expecting. And to accept Him would mean that they would have to change their beliefs. They did not like change any more than we do. Their belief in a Messiah that looked a lot like King David; strong,

brave, and one who followed the Law of Moses was not found in the person of Jesus. Can you image how they felt.

But what comes out of change can be good. New certainly, but not all bad. In fact, change can be a great thing. Think with me for a minute about the seeds you planted in your garden this year. You might now be eating the results of planting those seeds in good soil. The seed changed into something delicious, a tomato, squash, peppers and maybe even kale. But in order to make fruit that seed has to break open, stop being a seed, grow into a plant that then yields produce. Something new grew out of that broken open seed. Something changed.

Well, I believe that the same thing can happen with us. We grow, through life's experiences, with the help of the Holy Spirit. We change into creatures that are more like Jesus. Often it takes years of spiritual growth and sometimes much toil or tribulation but changing to be more like Jesus is our goal. We learn a greater appreciation for life and for the gifts God has given us.

As I was writing this message on Thursday, my computer decided to update to a new operating system. And it froze. After 5 hours on the phone with Apple, I was still not able to have my computer up and running. Another call on Friday morning to the next level of expert I was back up and working. But I have to tell you that I did not sleep very well that night wondering if my computer will ever get back to normal, if I will loose all my pictures and files and if I will ever get back to where I was before that fatal download. Yes things today look different on my computer desktop. I have to look for things that were at my fingertips before, but I did not lose pretty much anything. And with this new set up I am hoping to never go through that stress again.

Change, it sure is hard. I had many tears over my computer crash and I have had many over the way life is during our pandemic. But with that I also have realized my blessings. I have learned things about myself, about technology and I think I am a better person because of those situations. They have changed me. Also, watching the news Friday morning, I saw fires, riots, and even a house that blew up and a young girl was killed. I felt rather foolish being so upset over my little computer inconvenience. But folks when things

are put in our path that disrupt our lives, we push back and don't want to accept what is now something new.

Change comes to us all the time, in ways expected and unexpected, pleasant and unpleasant. But out of every change comes something new, something we can grasp on to and explore to find out what God has put in our midst and why. In the Book of Revelation, God says, "See I am making all things new." He promises that He will be with us always from the beginning to the end, alpha to omega. He will always be our God and we will be His people. Jesus died on a cross for us and that changed all of human history, certainly for the better for all believers. He will never forsake us or leave us. And when the time is right there will be a new heaven and a new earth, as John says. And that will be the final change, when Christ comes again to be with us for all eternity.

So you see change is good as we move through life aspiring to be more like Jesus. So when there is a change in your life, look for the opportunity to make something come about from the newness. Luther would say that we start every day as a new creature, remembering our baptism and being made new in those forgiving and grace-filled waters.

This week as I was studying for this message, I found a prayer Roger Lovett wrote that I would like to pray for us now. So let us pray....

Lord of the old and the new, help us not to make the same mistakes as the scribes and Pharisees in every age have made. When you did not come in expected ways, when you did not speak in a predictable voice, when you did not fit into their well-managed categories, they could not believe you were there.

We do not want to turn away as they did. But we find ourselves making the same miscalculations by thinking you will only come to us in the familiar. Open our eyes this day to the wonders of a new heaven and a new earth. Open our hearts this Sunday to the fresh challenges you still have in store for all your children. And when we are tempted to turn away in unbelief, help us to see the graces not yet revealed, that we might once again be lost in Your wonder, love and praise. **AMEN**