

10/6/2019

“World Communion”

Scripture: Luke 17:5-6 (7-10); 2 Timothy 1:1-9(10-14)

Series: Living Faith in the Everyday

Theme: In our complex, “everyday” world, in order to have a vibrant faith, one must be living it out in word and deed.

Well, this has been an interesting past couple of days for me, that some of you can probably relate to. First, let me say that just a month ago, Karen and I finally had two 60 foot trees -- which loomed over her dad’s residence and all three of our cars -- taken down. One tree was totally dead and losing limbs and the other with half of it dead already losing branches as well. Having experienced the destruction of downed trees before, I no longer wanted to risk it happening again. I could imagine any one of our cars squashed like a bug, and the amount of time and money it would take to deal with it.

Well, Friday morning, as I was driving up I-95 to a rescheduled doctor’s appointment in heavy but fast traffic, I was in the center lane. When all of a sudden, a car on the right of me veers over toward my lane – not cutting in front of me, but rite next to me! Without hesitating, I hit my horn and swerved to the left, not realizing there was another car, of identical make and model to mine, in the left lane. He swerved left when he saw me, but not before we hugged each other for a moment. Thankfully, neither he, his passenger, nor I sustained injuries, and our cars had no major damage. My insurance will cover his damage, and I will have a \$500 deductible to pay.

While waiting for the police to arrive, the other driver, his passenger, and I had a nice conversation about the incident, as well as where we came from and were heading. They were two Chinese American men in their thirties, from Brooklyn, New York, which happened to be where my paternal grandfather also lived years ago. They were heading up from Florida on their way to Allentown, PA, before returning to New York.

Small world.

Friends, we may have our days and lives planned out, but life can change at any moment, bringing us into the unexpected, and connecting us with others whom we've never known.

Which brings me to today's message.

Today we begin a month long worship focus on "Living Faith in the Everyday", which has a dual meaning.

As Jack Seymour, Professor Emeritus of Religious Education, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, IL says, "When using the word "living" as an adjective, this series compels us to seek a vibrant faith-life in everyday circumstances. Here, "faith" is the keyword and the emphasis is on having vibrant, living faith. When using it as a verb, this series narrows in on the action of "living," underscoring the messiness of living out our stories of faith in this complex world. We believe this series, "Living Faith in the Everyday," accentuates both dimensions. **In our complex, "everyday" world, in order to have a vibrant faith, one must be living it out in word and deed.**" (*UMC Discipleship Ministries*)

† **We celebrate World Communion Sunday in recognition of the inclusive and global nature of the church and its work.**

"This first Sunday in October is the celebration of World Communion Sunday. Recognized by several Christian denominations since the late 1930s and early 1940s, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church has designated World Communion Sunday as recognition of the inclusive and global nature of the church's work.

"World Communion means that people across differences of culture and history join at the table that God sets before us. Look at the dates of its founding – late 1930s and early 1940s. Worldwide Communion was named during a time the world was divided in what became a devastating world war. World Communion Sunday was begun in hope – looking for a time when barriers could be crossed and communities united.

“Today, on this Sunday, millions join together to celebrate Holy Communion. United Methodist Church (special) offerings go to empower students for service both in the United States and internationally. Yet, rumors of war are still heard, and barriers dividing people are still being built.”

So, this week opens on a shared ecumenical observance of living our faith together: World Communion Sunday. While this is a great Sunday to highlight the global nature of the universal church, it also presents another opportunity give thanks for our local ecumenical collaboration. The CCEA, the Chesapeake City Ecumenical Association of which our congregation belongs, is a good way for us to learn of other expressions of Christian faith and worship, but also a great way for us to work together to share and show the love of Jesus Christ to one another and still others in our community.

† **The gift of World Communion is that even in the midst of brokenness and despair, God’s vision calls us forward with the continued presence of the Holy Spirit.**

From the gospel according to Luke, we read of Jesus exhorting his disciples about faith. In his account, Jesus speaks not only of being a good example and not causing others to stumble, but of holding others accountable, and forgiving others as often as they show repentance. Just after this, his apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” That’s when Jesus replied, *“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.”*(Luke 17:1-6)

This made me think how difficult it can be for some to forgive others, especially if they have been wronged repeatedly, and especially if the one doing harm is not repentant.

We may also think of those who struggle to welcome or fully accept others who are different in one way or another.

And we may also think of those who are living in parts of the world whose lives are endangered by openly sharing their faith. Although I don’t usually read them in full, I receive a newsletter from The Voice of the Martyrs, whose mission is

“Serving persecuted Christians through practical and spiritual assistance and leading other members of the body of Christ into fellowship with them.” Their mission and ministry came to mind when I read the lectionary passage from 2 Timothy.

In it Paul writes (2 Timothy 1:1-9):

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

“I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time . . .”

As Jack Seyour says,

“The gift of World Communion is that even in the midst of brokenness and despair, God’s vision calls us forward. For Jesus, table fellowship was amazing. He gathered with diverse groups of people, even some who were not welcomed by others (see Matthew 11:18-19; Mark 2:15-17; & Luke 7:33-34). Gathering at table sought to embody the vision of Isaiah (a prophet important to Jesus) where God would “wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth” (Isaiah 25:8 NRSV). Through table fellowship, Jesus called his followers to feed one another and build community.

“As we eat the bread and share the cup, we remember God’s gifts of a good creation and God’s continuing creation. We remember the gift of Jesus and the way he taught us to live. We remember the continuing presence of the Spirit.

“The message of World Communion is not simply hope instead of despair or endurance instead of tears. It calls for work! The vision of God’s banquet calls us to join with others. It calls us to reach out across barriers. It asks us to work

with others to make the banquet a reality. The gift of the vision of God's Table calls us to do more than the ordinary. We are called to live the Table – to join with those who are different from us, to work for healing and build community.”(ibid)

Thanks be to God, for the vision, the Son and the Spirit to build is into His kingdom community!

Questions for Reflection:

What are the concerns and “devastations” facing those in our community?

Remembering that World Communion Sunday was initiated to cross even warring boundaries, ask yourself what barriers you and your congregation need to cross.

Focus on the vision of the Table. Ask, together with members of your congregation, where you can work for this vision.