

Fifth Sunday Lent – B -2018
Jeremiah 31.31-34///Hebrews 5.7-9///John 12.20-33

---of all readings during Lent...today's gospel passage is one of my favorites

→it is the one passage that I usually use at wake services at funeral homes because it reveals to us a profound insight about human nature and about our relationship to God

---recall in it...some Greeks come to Phillip with the request....that they would like to see Jesus

---and Jesus answers them with a series of paradox's

---a "grain of wheat must die to bear fruit"

---a "person who loves life will lose it"

---a "person who hates life will preserve it"

---[and]...when you think about it... all three of those examples are similar in meaning.....and reveal to us the paradox of human life.....of nature.....and of our world

----that "through death....comes life"... that through dying we gain eternal life

---think about that for a moment

"through death....comes life"

----how true that is.....because...how many "deaths" do we experience throughout our own lives...only to have new life happen

----in nature: our seasons show that to be very true----each November our world
around us dies

our horizon becomes bare, our sky turns gray, our air is cold...only to have in March
and April new life all around us ----with flowers blooming....trees blossoming...skies turning blue

seeds are planted so that crops and plants can grow

---->catapillars become butterflys

----and our whole world around us changes

---->likewise in our own lives///the same holds true as well

---we experience many deaths [so to speak]...so that we can also enjoy new life

----think for a moment about the many deaths...[the many endings] that we experience
throughout our lives so that we can have new life...new beginnings

---every time we close a chapter in our lives...a new door opens for us with new
opportunities, new adventures,[and] new directions for us to experience and embrace

---we all go off to kindergarten on that first day of school as we close the door on
being home with mom and dad only to celebrate and begin our new life of adventure, of discovery,
of new possibilities...a death in one sense...and a new life in another

----we all end high school and go off either to college, or to work to pursue our dreams and
hopes, our goals and desires...a death in one sense...and a new life in another.

---a middle-aged man or woman experiences death as they lose their job, yet there new life happens as they begin a second career, a death in one sense...a new life in another

---as parents walks their child down the aisle to get married....they experience an ending...and yet at the same time parents also celebrate and rejoice in their child's new beginning

---and finally, all of us will be wheeled down this aisle at our final death....only to celebrate the new life we share in Christ in heaven...and ending and a new life that was given to us in baptism

--->and this paradox is also a part of our Church...this Lent we began our sacred journey of finding hope in the midst of cold and snow with ashes....and we will end it hopefully with sunshine and warmth as we celebrate Easter in a few weeks.....likewise

→....every time we pour water over a person in baptism, a part of us...a part of our humanness dies so that we can discover life in Christ

....each time we gather around this table a part of our old self dies....and we eat bread and drink wine so that we might be strengthened and renewed live life to its fullest

→[and]...so you see this paradox of endings and beginnings....death and life.....is all around us, it is an essential part of who we are...and an essential part of our lives and our faith

---[you see], Jesus didn't want to die on the cross any more than you and I want to die...but he had too so that we could live and have new life

Jesus didn't want to be seen as radical by the people of his time....but he had to so that we could hear his message

Jesus didn't want to speak out against the status quo...but he had to so that we could know his message

→and that same challenge is presented to you and me today as well

→we need to experience our deaths...hardships and trials so that we too might have new life and new possibilities

and as we all know too well.....those deaths...those endings....are sometimes painful...

--they might be radical

--they may be difficult and challenging

AND YET THAT IS THE ONLY WAY FOR US TO HAVE NEW LIFE...new beginnings...new opportunities and new experiences

PAUSE

---next week begins Holy Week, a most acceptable time for remembering death and new life the death and new life of Christ AND our death and new life as well

---it is a most acceptable time to remember that we live in Christ and that we are committed to following him through his passion,

through the various moments and deaths of our own lives

so that we can celebrate his resurrection

so that we can celebrate new life and find hope

→In reality Christ's story has become our own.

and our own homes, neighborhoods, places of business, our streets, is where the drama of Christ's passover is now played out----

----the drama of Christ's death and resurrection is indeed....played out in our own families, with our own hands, with our own tears and struggles....our joys and achievements.

→in essence all of us need to die in so many ways.....so that we can have new life.....

we all need to be that grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies

we need to lose our life in this world...so that we can serve and follow

because you see in the end....

---that is the only way Holy Week makes any sense

---and that is the only way our faith and lives make any sense