

Sermon

September 12, 2021

First Presbyterian Church of Hackettstown

Let us pray:

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Amen

Milestones in history. December 7, 1941.

September 11, 2001. Two dates sixty years apart. Two dates that will live infamy. Two dates where the United States came under brutal and senseless attacks.

December 7th was day witnessed by the greatest generation, namely the parents of what we call the “baby boomer” generation. In my book, my parents generation will always hold that title of the “greatest generation,” for not only did they survive the great depression with ingenuity, but sacrificed, fought and won a world war that threatened human existence as we know it.

I, being a baby boomer, grew up during the 1950's, 60's and early 70's. I vividly recall other dates that had a profound effect upon our nation.

The 1960's was a decade which began with great hope and anticipation and ended in utter turmoil.

November 22, 1963. The assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Total disbelief and profound sadness engulfed our country. Nations of the world shared our grief. It was if everything stood still for three long days following that tragic day.

Fast forward to April and June of 1968. Once again, we witness two more senseless assassinations, that of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Senator Robert F. Kennedy, brother to the late president.

All three men cut down in the prime of their lives, leaving behind three widows and 17 fatherless children.

As that decade continued turmoil persisted. Riots broke out all across the nation. Cities burned. People protested the lack of civil and voting rights not to mention the endless involvement in the Vietnam War. Sound familiar?

Back in 1963, I was a freshman at Boonton High School.

In 1968 I was a freshman music education major at Montclair State.

In 2001 I was a Professor of Music and acting chairperson of the Art and Music Dept. at Seton Hall University.

All three events, including of course the passing of my parents and brother marked milestones in my life.

Nearly three thousand innocent people perished twenty years ago. Seton Hall mourned the deaths of forty graduates who were worked at the Trade Center.

We remember the countless acts of bravery and selflessness exhibited that day by the first responders who rushed into the Trade Center and the Pentagon. We remember the passengers aboard United Airline flight 93 who after they took a vote amongst themselves, (how American that is) stormed the cockpit with Todd Beamer leading the way with the infamous words, “Are you ready? Okay? Let’s roll!” Those were the last words spoken by those brave men and women who sacrificed their own lives in order to save others. For that flight was headed for our nation’s capital.

What many folks do not realize that just before they stormed that cockpit, they recited the Lord’s prayer and Psalm 23.

Extraordinary men and women during an extraordinary time. Yet some may ask, where was Jesus during 9/11?

Where has Jesus been during this horrid pandemic that has ravaged our country and the world? Why has God allowed our country to become so filled with hate, divided and tribal in nature?

Maybe we can find part of the answer in today's first scripture reading where Wisdom asks; "How long, o simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers (doubters) delight in their scoffing(doubting) and fools hate knowledge?"

Now I don't know about you, but as for me, as a woman of faith I am also a great believer of science and preventative medicine. I equate getting a vaccine to that of wearing a seatbelt. A seatbelt saves lives. I can attest to that, as I almost lost my life several years ago when my car was struck and flipped over. It was a seatbelt

and God that saved my life that day. (Along with some angels I suspect) So too can a vaccine save our lives and the lives of others.

As we reflect upon the past twenty years we continue to ask again and again where has Jesus been during all this?

Maybe, just maybe the answer lies within us.

Maybe we have failed to deny ourselves, to take up our own respective crosses and become **true** followers of Jesus.

Perhaps we have focused more on what is temporal, mundane and worldly rather concentrate on what is divine and eternal.

With that in mind, let us revisit the words of our opening hymn to really ponder and digest. I suspect we may discover some words of wisdom and some practical answers within those verses.

Verse 1

“Jesus calls us: o’er the tumult of our life’s wild restless sea; day by day his sweet voice soundest saying, “Christian, follow me.

Translation: Jesus is there for us during the most difficult and tumultuous times during our lives, we need to take the time to pray and listen to His guidance. Take time to listen!

Verse 2

“Jesus calls us from the worship of the vain world’s golden store, from each idol that would keep us saying, “Christian, love me more.”

In other words, stop following the shiny object or idolizing something or someone who isn’t genuine and real.

Verse 4

“Jesus calls us by thy mercies, Savior, may we hear thy call, give our hearts to thy obedience, serve and love thee best of all.”

Via the mercy and grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, may we truly listen, embrace, and with honesty serve, take up our crosses and follow in Jesus’ footsteps. Amen