

**Sermon: Sixth Sunday after Epiphany
February 12, 2017
The Rev. Mary Louise Allen
Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Psalm 119:1-8, I
Corinthians 3:1-9, Matthew 5:21-37**

It is a set of lessons like these that make me wish for assisting clergy because they would get assigned to preach. However, I don't have that luxury so here we go.

We have just been through the most contentious election in recent history. We have found our country having a sharp divide and our post election period has had no signs of that divide healing. That divide can be seen and felt within our country as well as our own communities, families, and even our church.

The lessons today speak to this difficulty.

In Deuteronomy the law tells us to Choose Life. And Jesus tells us to choose life abundantly! This is a part of the Law. To love God. To walk in God's ways and follow his commandments and CHOOSE LIFE! As a community as well as an individual, we are told, required, to choose life.

I had one of those wake up at 3 in the morning moments early last week and the quote in my head was "These are the times that try mens souls." Of course I was unable to go back to sleep until I checked my memory for the source. I was reassured that I was correct that it was Thomas Paine. That quote feels very appropriate for us all at this time in our history. But there was another quote that I also was reminded of from Maya Angelou: "We are more alike than unlike." "We are more alike than unlike." I believe it is vital for us to remember this as we think about being the community of Christ. The Jesus Movement. "We are more alike than unlike."

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians he is addressing divisions and conflicts within the community of faith...Sounds familiar. They have split along lines of who to follow. Some claiming that they are followers of Paul, others following Apollos. Paul exhorts them to remember that they are all under one God and baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and that it is he they should follow. Not unlike us today where some are for Trump and some are for Hillary. But just as Paul instructs the Corinthians to remember they are still one community under Jesus Christ I feel we must make that same choice. No matter our differences, we are still one in Christ Jesus! Again....choosing life.

And then we have the gospel. This is a continuation of the Sermon on the Mount. If you think my sermons are long, this one goes on for three chapters!

Jesus is instructing the crowd, the disciples, and us, in the way to be a community. How we are to act with each other. How we are to be with God. How we are to BE. Choosing life.

One of the bloggers I read included a poem this week that I have found moving. It's called "clotheslines"

i
you
us
them
those people
wouldn't it be lovely
if one could
live
in a constant state
of we?
some of the most
commonplace
words
can be some of the biggest
dividers
they
what if there was
no they?
what if there
was only
us?
if words could be seen
as they floated out
of our mouths
would we feel no
shame
as they passed beyond
our lips?
if we were to string
our words
on a communal clothesline
would we feel proud
as our thoughts
flapped in the
breeze?¹

It is easy for us to get caught up in our differences, but as Christians, as followers of the "Jesus Movement" as our Presiding Bishop has called us to be, we are called to a different standard. It should not matter if we are a democrat, or a republican, or a whatever because we, together, are a community of faith. Called to Choose Life. Called to live together. Together. With Christ. Amen.

¹ "clothesline," poem by Marilyn Maciel. Published in Patti Digh, "Life Is a Verb: 37 Days To Wake Up, Be Mindful, And Live Intentionally." (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 42.