

## **WELCOME 16<sup>th</sup> June 2019 – 1 Pentecost '19 C (Trinity)**

Acts 2:42-47 & Luke 6:46-49

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! Special welcome to our visitors & guests... It's our privilege & joy to serve you in worship.

Pay it Forward was a feel good movie from about 20 years ago in which a teen boy discovers the joy in not repaying a good turn done for him to the person who did it, but in *paying it forward* doing good for 3 other people so that the good done to him multiplies in doing it beyond himself.

Throughout these weeks after Easter we've been exploring the victory of the resurrection as it transforms each of our lives. Living...In Christ...In Honesty...In Worship...In Suffering...In Trust...In Certainty...By the Spirit

In many ways...our call as followers of Jesus/people of the resurrection is to pay it forward...to live that victory beyond our narrow self-interest into the lives of the people & the world around us. To live now, knowing the final victory is already ours in Christ...How's that going for you?

Is your life different now that you've been given life that never ends? I know...

Always remember: "...the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead..." (Eph 1:19-20) is in you.

In Christ, by his power, we live the promised journey toward fullness of healing & life and discover a grace that is "making all things new" including us. We have the opportunity every day to live responding to that newness & that power rather than simply reacting to the crushing weight or the soul-draining busy-ness of 21<sup>st</sup> century life...We'll explore & experience that today...

**Let's pray...**

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

*"You never go away from us, yet we have difficulty in returning to You. Come, Lord Jesus, stir us up and call us back. Kindle and seize us. Be our fire and our sweetness. Let us love. Let us run."* — Augustine of Hippo

Heavenly Father fill our hearts today with your joy. Surrounded by things that would draw our attention away from you...Remove from us our distractions, our heart-worries, our to-dos & should-haves & the constant stress & strain. In their place, Father, give us more of You. Here today fill our hearts with peace, our mouths with laughter, & our tongues with your praise. Fill us brimming and overflowing with your Spirit. Let every thought word & deed from this point be a reflection of your saving love & the mighty power that raised Christ from the grave. Through Jesus Christ we pray...Amen!

## 1 PENTECOST '19 C – MAKING ALL THINGS NEW: LIVING IN RESPONSE

### FAITH CHAT:

1. In the last week, where/when has the resurrection made a difference for you? Why?
2. In the last week, where was one place you saw God at work? In you...situation...someone else?

We're going to spend a good deal of time talking to each other today...as we bring this particular worship series to not so much a "close" but... "now let's take it from here."→

Martin Luther wrote, "It really doesn't matter if Jesus rose from the dead if He isn't risen in you!" What do you think he meant by that? Why is that important? What evidence does your life give that Christ is risen in you? What would you need to change so that Christ is more readily manifest in you?

The texts we read today are an interesting pair...but both deal with how we respond to Jesus. Let's just look again: Both...different as they may be...are about how we might respond to Jesus. What do you see in these 2 texts? What are the possible responses that might emerge from an encounter with Jesus?

What do you think Jesus means by "obey"? Is it only & always a matter of "do what you're told" or is there more to it than that? To 'obey' is not just to tick the boxes of specific commands. Yep! Did that. Remember the Jews were scrupulous about their obedience to the law of Moses...tithed the herbs from their gardens...kept minute requirements of the law...but Jesus said their hearts were far from him. Is it possible to obey & live in rebellion at the same time? Ever had a child obey through gritted teeth & stomped feet? Obedience is not compliance alone...we have robots for that.

The challenge of living in response to Jesus is a deeper call...challenge. Obedience implies partnership – shared work – sense of unity of purpose & will...Jesus asks "Why call *me* Lord if you're going to keep being lord for yourself? Why do you call me Lord...but live for your own ends not mine?...but reflect a heart that is still tuned to its own wavelength & not mine?...but have not let me transform the DNA/fabric of your soul into the person God desires you to be?...but want me to bless your wants & desires & selfishness?

A number of years ago...US Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in one of his opinions...“At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.” Now that may be sound legal doctrine...but that's horrible theology because it is precisely that sense of “me on the throne of my life” that Jesus calls us to abandon in obedience to him & for which he died/rose to set us free.

But let's go back to that 2<sup>nd</sup> text: *All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, & to fellowship, & to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), & to prayer.* This part of the narrative that Luke records ended last week with 3000 people being added to the church...The Spirit demonstrated that the law given at Sinai (the law that they never kept, broke b/4 Moses got off the mountain, continually points out our sin & was never able to save anyone/make us right w/ God) has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ – has reached its fulfillment/conclusion in the one who lived its demands & suffered its punishment for us so that we could live free from it in full abundant life with the Father now & forever. Spirit comes to demonstrate the past is undone & the future wide open

And instantly those believers begin to...do this. They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, they were in fellowship, they engaged in the breaking of bread together, & they prayed. The DNA/fabric of their lives was transformed as they were drawn by the Spirit to see that their hopes & dreams & salvation were accomplished for them by Jesus...they saw the distance they & their ancestors had lived from God & the self-inflicted devastation they had experienced because of their sin & they saw that sin forgiven by the one they helped crucify...they experienced the redeeming love of Christ in a real way which built their fellowship & drew them together in a unique community that was solely & obviously dependent on God for everything.

*A deep sense of awe came over them all, & the apostles performed many miraculous signs & wonders. All the believers met together in one place & shared everything they had. They sold their property & possessions & shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, & shared their meals with great joy & generosity — all the while praising God & enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.*

There was no specific command of Jesus to do that...descriptive NOT prescriptive but being rooted in the promises of God as foundation/life orientation/identity/self-understanding/worldview they were equipped AS ARE YOU to offer to someone else what you trust in Jesus & what Jesus provides for all who trust in him. This was how the earliest believers responded to Jesus...I don't think Luke wanted us to look at this as the “perfect/ideal church.” What he does is paint a picture...& the biblical picture of church is not what someone gets from the church, although one receives a great deal, but what one gives & how one contributes...partnership – shared work – sense of unity of purpose & will. The portrait of the early church in Acts shows that community & the welfare of the group were the priority. This attitude reflected spiritual maturity that allowed the church to grow. In the case of this earliest community, the believers preaching & witnessing

was matched by their community, making a powerful testimony for their mission. When the early church said “God cares/loves,” the care/love they gave their own made it real. “Fellowship” κοινωνία is more than a shared meal or tea & sandwiches. It is a recognized material tangible closeness where people share & contribute to a common cause. Biblically, koinōnia is sharing & participating in the cause of Christ...such that the world around us sees & is engaged. Each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

When not-yet-believers look at the church today...Is there anything they see that could be awe-inspiring? Why? Why not? Do you see anything awe-inspiring in the church? Why do you think these people responded to Jesus the way they did?

You want to see something amazing? Check out these 2 vss of Scripture. *Dt 15:4-5: “There should be no poor among you, for the Lord your God will greatly bless you in the land he is giving you as a special possession. You will receive this blessing if you are careful to obey all the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today.”*

*Acts 4:32ff: All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great blessing was upon them all. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.*

Now here’s the deal...Dt 15 is part of Moses’ last instruction to the people about to enter the Promised Land: God will so bless them if they live responsive to his will/word that there’ll be plenty to share so that no one will be needy. Acts 4 is evidence of God keeping that promise in the early church. There were no needy in their community because they took what they had & made sure everyone had enough. Moses speaks God’s intention for his people & in the community of Christ empowered by his Spirit...it is fulfilled. Signs wonders & miracles aren’t just casting out demons or multiplying loaves & fish...I reckon radical generosity unlimited hospitality inseparable fellowship unflagging servanthood are miracles in a world that has set individual prosperity individual freedom & individual entitlement as its highest values.

Let’s look again at our Scriptures...*I will show you what it’s like when someone comes to me, listens to my teaching, & then follows it...What’s the result? Strength, durability, security...in the face of whatever circumstance or situation or threat...All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, & to fellowship, & to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), & to prayer... What’s the result? Strength beyond their human capacity or understanding...durability that grew against the empire that would have crushed them...enduring security against every threat... radical generosity unlimited hospitality inseparable fellowship unflagging servanthood and God gave growth that lasts to this day...you are the children of that church*

By Christ’s resurrection & the sending of the Spirit into the lives of his people the power of sin to enslave us is finished, the power of death to frighten us is gone & the promise of Christ’s power in all circumstances is assured. And that good news is compelling & life changing enough to share --- expecting that the same abundance the early Christ-followers enjoyed can be ours too because *God is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Eph. 3:20*

Let’s pray with that in mind...**Gracious Father, you have promised to make all things new: to give peace in place of hatred, calm instead of anxiety, to replace enmity with friendship, and grant relief to all who suffer. By your Spirit make our hearts and lives respond in trust and obedience such that your church is strengthened, your mission furthered, your Kingdom expanded and your Name praised. Through Jesus Christ we pray...Amen.**