

SERMON 4 PENTECOST

Proper 8 6/28/20

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be always acceptable in our heart Oh Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen

Three short sentences. Our Gospel this morning is three short sentences. Easy right? Not so much. In the times we are experiencing, these words written thousands of years ago are particularly relevant. Jesus says “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple-- truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

Jesus talks of welcome, righteousness, prophets, and rewards. Pretty relevant to where we are today, I would say. We need all those attributes as we struggle to figure out how we are to come together again as the people of God to meet and welcome one another again and to allow ourselves to be welcomed by another; to be welcomed by someone we least expect to be the welcomer.

We have so much work to do to repair this world that God has given us to be stewards of we have to ask ourselves who are our modern-day prophets? Of course, we assume they will be our priests, Rabbi's, Bishops, Cardinals, or the Pope, but do we ever think that when we are searching for prophets we also need

a mirror? Did we ever think to look to the streets or into the faces of the hundreds of thousands of the people gathering and calling for justice?

The Miriam Webster dictionary has many definitions for a prophet. The one that brings us as a congregation and a nation to my mind is the following: an effective spokesperson for a cause, doctrine or a group. We too can be the prophets and healers of what God has freely gifted us. But we have to believe and that **we** can be prophets. We have to believe that **we** can make a difference in this craziness.

The reopening our church is of the utmost importance to us, but it is not, the only challenge we face in the days, and months ahead. Out of this pandemic has come not only illness and separation. We now face a serious problem with social injustice. Unfortunately, it is not a new problem but for a very long time it has been ignored and swept under the table. We have buried our heads and have come to convince ourselves that all is well. During this time of chaos, the unjust behavior has reared its ugly head and has come to the forefront of newscasts daily. The problem is what do we do about it? How do we heal the abuse of racism that plagues our country at this time?

In an interview with Bishop TD. Jakes the black pastor of a large church in Houston Texas, spoke about the death of George Floyd. He tells the stories of the black man's journey into slavery and the pain they endured. Even after all of this the bishop is able to say that this not only a black vs white issue, although that is the issue that is at the forefront of the interview and present unrest. He reminds us that this is a human issue. It is how we treat and love

one another in the name of God. It is the reason that Jesus gave His life that we all would be free in the kingdom of God, be our heritage be Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or any other ethnicity who are children of God in this world for we are **all** children of God. We are all human.

We started a conversation about this subject at Vestry last week. I shared the story of my 47year journey as an RN. I've taken care of people of people of all races. Each person I cared for had a heart beat in the same way, when they bled their blood was the same color, they have their babies the same way, and they love their babies just the same, just to name a few similarities of our humanity. We are **all** human created by God in his image.

How do we begin to **REALLY** end this inequality? How do we heal the gift we've been given and use it as our loving God intended it to be used? I believe we start by ending the silence, by speaking out. We begin healing by talking about the injustice that exists in this world, by taking out our brooms and sweeping out what we have swept away pretending it is gone.

The last thing Jesus mentions in today's gospel is righteousness. "Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous." The definition of righteous? Morally right or justifiable. We are being called by our Lord and Savior to perform righteous acts and make righteous decisions in His name. This is how we heal our world and move forward. Stay close to the cold water because We have

much hard work to do and we will need to share the work and the water. If we stay the course, the reward? Peace. Amen.

