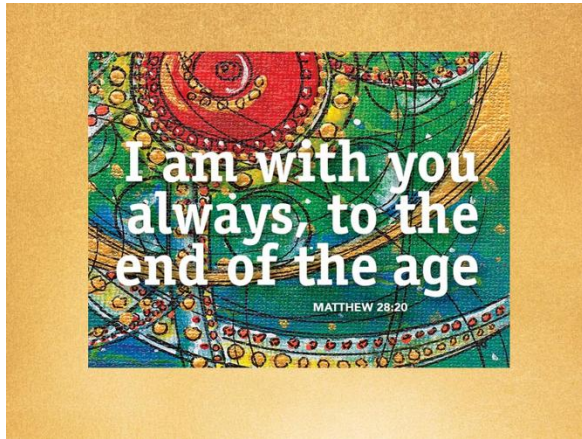


Sunday, June 7, 2020
Trinity Sunday
Grace Lutheran Church Somers Point, NJ 08244
Interim Pastor: Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf



I am memorizing a new prayer. "I breathe in your Spirit Lord Jesus. Keep me silent when I can best serve you with silence. I breathe in your spirit Lord Jesus. Help me speak when I can best serve you with words. I breathe in your spirit Lord Jesus. Help me do your will. Secure in your love. I breathe in your spirit Lord Jesus. Amen." Morning prayer in "The Word in Season "

Prayer keeps me focused on the mind of Christ. Even though there are other voices that interrupt

my thoughts. Breaking news constantly interrupting. I am anxious about preparing and preaching as breaking news disturbs my peace of mind. Pandemic continues as 19 states show a rise in covid-19 cases. People are not being safe. George Floyd's unjustified death. Peaceful protests to dismantle racial systems. Acts of violence, looting, people being hurt. And recently a storm with high dangerous straight winds knocking out power in our state. I called some friends who just had their power restored. Air conditioning on, refrigerator working so the food won't spoil. It's a lot to take in. I am grateful for Bishop Bartholomew's letter to the New Jersey Synod, June 2nd. I share the same burdens with our Bishop, pastors, leaders, and communities of faith. She writes, "I am weary and my heart is heavy...indeed there is much to grieve...death, injustice, sickness, prejudice, and violence...but we grieve trusting in God." We grieve trusting in God.

I came across this quote in a sermon St. Augustine famously said, "We are talking about God. What wonder is it that you do not understand. If you do understand, then it is not God." Elsewhere I read, "explaining the Trinity isn't the point: trusting the presence and power of the Triune God is." I love this refrain, "In the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Spirit I belong. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Spirit we belong!" Reminds me of St. Paul in prison singing praises to God in the midst of anxiety and uncertainty offering hope to those also confined. Broken lives given hope and the message of the gospel of Jesus ' resurrection.

Pastor William Sloan Coffin in "Credo" said, "that there is more mercy in God than sin in us." And again he explains, "Credo - I believe - best translates, I have given my heart to" ...however imperfectly I have given my heart to the teaching and example of Christ, which among many other things, informs my understanding of faiths other than Christianity...to fulfill the same function...to convert people from self preoccupation to the whole hearted giving of oneself in love for God and for others...for religious people to move from truth claiming - to the function truth plays."

What to do? Bishop Bartholomew's letter invites us to join her in witnessing to our faith by:

- (1) praying at noon every day,
- (2) learning and working justice and peace in some form of anti racism education, and
- (3) loving all people.

There is a story about John the Evangelist when he was a very old man living in Ephesus. He was so weak that his disciples could hardly carry him to church and he had difficulty speaking several words together in a connected thought. It became his practice to utter nothing except this simple sentence, "My little children, love each other." His disciples who lived with him became bored hearing the same words again and again and finally they asked him: "Master, why do you always say this?" He answered with a saying worthy of John: "Because this is the Lord's command. If that alone is done, it is enough."

(4) Recognizing those who carry out their vocation to save and protect their communities with integrity while working with them to demand transformation of unjust systems.

(5) Thanking essential workers who cannot stay home.

Trusting God we can do these. For the praise of God and for the advancement of God's kingdom.

I viewed our Presiding Bishop Eaton's message on The Holy Trinity which I hope you too will view. A powerful, truth telling, and hopeful message. She said, "God is relationship. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, us and all creatures. God is relationship!"

Growth - a little bit in the beginning and a lot more later on. Let us grow in our love for others and God's glory.

Now the peace which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ!