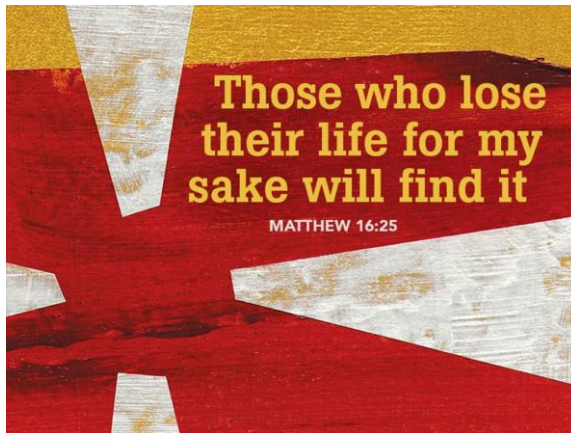


Sunday, August 30, 2020
Pentecost 13
Grace Lutheran Church
Somers Point, NJ 08244
Interim Pastor: Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf
“A Workshop of God’s Love”



“A Workshop of God's Love.” I found this title in the prayers of intercession, "God of community, you call us to rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, and persevere in prayer. Make our congregation a Workshop of your love." I am grateful to hear again the second reading of Romans 12 especially, "do not claim to be wiser than you are." I had confidence not to use the book in reading scripture standing at the graveside, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow." Politely a grieving relative

spoke up, no Pastor not tomorrow - forever. Yes! You are right Forever! Forever is longer than tomorrow. Still learning and growing in my faith with your help sisters and brothers in Christ.

Mr. Rogers taught, "Anyone who has ever been able to sustain good work has had at least one person- and often many - who have believed in him or her. We just don't get to be competent human beings without a lot of different investments from others." One aspect of a Workshop of God's Love is Apollo's story in Acts 18. "...a Judean from Ephesus was an eloquent man, well versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the way of God to Him more accurately. When Apollo wished to cross over to Achaea, the believers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. On his arrival he greatly helped those who through grace had become believers.

It's people like you in God's Workshop who make us stop and realize how much God spoils us! Grace upon Grace. Overflowing extravagance! How long does it take for our faith to mature in Christ? As long as it takes. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin explains, "...above all trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something, an unknown, something new...yet it is the law of all powers that it is made by passing through some stages of instability and that it may take a very long time and so I think it is with you. Your ideas mature gradually, let them grow. Let

them shape themselves without due haste. Don't try to force them on as though you could be today what time (that is to say grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make you tomorrow. Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be. Give our Lord the benefit of believing that God's hand is leading you and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete." Trust the slow work of God. In God's Workshop we make progress together.

Again let me share C. S. Lewis' perspective on 'Carriers of Christ' from "Mere Christianity" - "People (men) are mirrors or carriers of Christ to others (men). Sometimes unconscious carriers. This "good infection" (which can be God 's love, truth, joy, peace) can be carried by those who have not got it themselves. People who were not Christians themselves helped me to Christianity. But usually it is those who know Christ that bring Christ to others. That is why the church, (God's Workshop) the whole Body of Christians showing Christ to one another, is so important. You might say that when two Christians are following Christ together, it is not twice as much Christianity as when they are apart, but sixteen times as much."

My neighbors are hesitant to worship at their church because of health risks. They know I'm a semi-retired Lutheran Pastor assisting Grace's change toward a new pastor. He shared his daughter's experience in searching for a church in the New England area. She found a nice looking church, bringing the whole family. The parishioners and pastor were welcoming and hospitable. She realized they were the only worshippers with children. She continued to bring the whole family every Sunday. As other families stepped inside, she greeted them with hospitality. More families connected and the church expanded its ministry.

Let us pray: God of community , we confess it is not always easy to love. Sometimes we choose the comfortable way and miss out on opportunities to be blessed by an unexpected encounter. Help us to suspend our quick judgments and make us ready to behold you in all people. Amen. "The Word in Season." Saturday Prayer.