

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Rev. J.D. McQueen, II - All Saints' Episcopal Church, San Diego, CA

The shape of salvation history as a whole is nuptial, marital, pointed towards our union with God.

- Not only do we see it over and over, but it's the lens for understanding all of scripture.
- Of course, that makes sense since it's the story of our personal relationship with God.

God is always seeking union with us through prayer, worship, study, loving our neighbor, and so on.

- But how do we do it? How do we keep growing in it?
- In the first part of today's passage from Paul's letter to the Romans, Paul gives us the practical essence of it.

Romans: "Present your bodies as a *living sacrifice*...", "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..."

First of all, what does it mean to be a "living sacrifice"?

- Spiritual tradition has different ways of expressing this; "submitting to the will of God," "Abandonment to the Divine Providence,"
- Accurate, but sound more scary than inviting, so I like "**receiving the sacrament of the present moment**" Acknowledges/reminds us of some important things

Present Moment:

- God is willing our good, loving us closer to him in every moment, interaction, circumstance of our lives;
- nothing is unimportant to him, nothing is outside his control;
- everything that enters our lives is something that he has either sent or allowed for the sake of our salvation

September 3, 2017

Sacrament – helpful to think of as a “sacrament” because we’re reminded that what we can perceive isn’t the deepest reality

- Like the Eucharist, treasure hidden under a veil
- Immediate reaction is that that isn’t always obvious, which brings us to...

Receive – a sacrament is a gift offered, not something imposed

- Requires a certain degree of faith to accept that, which God longs to give, but we have to ask for
- Examples: BVM – “be it done unto me according to thy word”, pondering, keeping, treasuring in her heart
- Jesus: teaches to pray “thy will be done” and we see that explicitly in the Garden, on Cross

There’s an old joke about this that goes, “The problem with a *living* sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar,”

- which perfectly explains why St. Paul also tells us “Do not be *conformed* to *this* world, but be *transformed* by the *renewal* of your *mind*...”
- What we see in today’s gospel lesson is an example of the struggle of not yet being fully transformed

Peter wants to give his whole self, but catches a glimpse of something he doesn’t have enough faith to accept

- Believes Jesus can call him to walk on water, until he sees the waves
- Believes Jesus is the Messiah, but not that the Messiah must suffer and die
- Desperately wants to remain with Jesus, keeps hanging around, but just doesn’t have the strength

That’s kind of the story we all share when it comes to our relationship with God.

- We want to pray, read the Bible, go to Mass, until we see other things we’d rather do.
- We want to believe, but there are so many things that are greater than our faith.

September 3, 2017

- We want to give ourselves to Jesus, but we can't give what we don't possess.

So what can we do about that? **Receive the sacrament of the present moment.**

Receive the sacrament of the present moment.

- The beauty is that God is not waiting in some far off place until we do all those other things
- He's come to meet us right where we are, in whatever thing is right in front of us.

Jesus never asks us for anything that isn't in our power to do or give – just look at Peter.

- Jesus gave Peter the power to walk on the water, Peter just let go of it.
- When Jesus asked the apostles about His identity, the HS gave Peter the answer.
- When Peter denied Jesus instead of dying with him, it was because Jesus didn't ask him to die with him.

Even when the Church prescribes things like going to Mass or fasting, it qualifies it.

- You're not obliged to go to Mass if you're sick or there's no church nearby.
- You're not obliged to fast if you're above or below a certain age or have some physical limitation.

So the 1st part of receiving the sacrament of the present moment is to simply do what's in front of you with all the love you can muster.

- Ask the HS to help you remember that and over time you'll grow in your awareness of what is and isn't in your power.
- And when you try something that isn't in your power to do, remember the old adage, "Where you stumble, dig for treasure."

This applies to the 2nd part of the sacrament of the present moment as well, which is the “receiving.”

- There are lots of things in life that we don't have control over, and so our choice is how we receive them.
- Do we get angry or bitter? Do we try to suppress them or numb their effects?
- Or do we lean into them? Do we offer God a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving?
- Do we ask God for the grace and faith to have confidence in his love for us and the whole world?

Over time, moment by moment, God transforms us and renews our minds by enlarging our capacity for his faith and love.

- And we never have to be discouraged when we fail because God never stops coming to us.
- He's extending his hand before we've even fallen.