

Lectionary 21 - 11th Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday, August 21, 2022

Isaiah 58:9b-14; Psalm 103:1-8; Hebrews 12:18-29; **LUKE 13:10-17**

CALL – We seek to do the Good to protect the Gospel

Traditions...we have lots of them.

Especially in a 200-year-old congregation

What are some traditions that you have enjoyed?

What are some that were held more dearly when you were young but have passed on?

Lots of traditions

And WHY???

Why do we hold onto tradition?

(get examples)

These are all good intentions, right?

We want to hold on to that which is dear and gives us MEANING and LIFE and RELATIONSHIP.

How many of those traditions did we mention do this?

Give us MEANING and LIFE and RELATIONSHIP.

Traditions can be beautiful and bring life

I can still remember running around the pews at Holy Trinity LC, in Hasbrouck Heights, NJ,

Helping my dad set up for Christmas, hanging Chrismons, and making pretzels during Advent

I can remember going through Confirmation and Sunday School

And the teachers who were present to help shape my faith

I can remember the smells and the sights of the congregations I grew up in...

And yet...for all of the good our traditions can bring...we must be careful...

For – as we are all creatures of habit – we can turn “tradition” into an idol

These TRADITIONS always “MEAN WELL” but do our traditions cause harm?

When we break tradition we start to point fingers

We start to close our hearts off the GOOD NEWS,

In favor of the accepted tradition

In Isaiah, God reminds the people (through the prophetic words of Isaiah)

In 58:9:

- If you remove the yoke from among you, the finger-pointing, the wicked speech;
- 10 if you open your heart to the hungry, and provide abundantly for those who are afflicted, your light will shine in the darkness, and your gloom will be like the noon.
- 11 The Lord will guide you continually and provide for you, even in parched places. He will rescue your bones. You will be like a watered garden, like a spring of water that won't run dry.

CHALLENGE – The Good we do sometimes gets in the way of the Gospel

God sees that we can let our “good intentions” and our “traditions”
get in the way of the Gospel being experienced in full!

These traditions and good order can – on in many occasions – blind us to our bigotry
We could lose sight of the importance of relationships and wholeness
When we unquestioningly move on with our traditions.

We start to point fingers at each other for breaking tradition

We start to uphold the tradition or the practice as the IDOL that we are called to AVOID

The bent-over woman in our Gospel today (Luke 13) was shamed for not coming back “tomorrow”
(or ANY OTHER DAY OF THE WEEK besides the SABBATH).

Do you remember how long she had been ill with this physical challenge?

18 years!

And just imagine being told...even though today is a great opportunity...not today.

Sorry, we're closed. Come back tomorrow.

We want you to be healed...but just not today.

Healing in the time of Jesus was seen on occasion.

So while the healing itself is VERY IMPORTANT...that is NOT the only thing happening here.

I see at least two other things happening:

1. Jesus is bringing this person back into the community
 - a. For illnesses and crippled bodies were seen as the results of sin or wrongdoing
2. (and more importantly) – Jesus was pointing out the hypocrisy of the faith community
 - a. And pointed out their lack of joy in another's freedom

There is a better way, says God

The way of grace and mercy.

The way of Grace and Mercy provides for fullness in the self,

When the focus is on the other.

A famous theologian, Frederick Beuchner, passed away recently,

And here is one of his most used quotes:

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and
the world's deep hunger meet.” [REPEAT]

COMPLETION – The Gospel brings us together and doesn't need us to protect it

And so, we take what God has given us...and we – quite often – pervert it

We mean well...we make the traditions and we uphold them, because we think that honors God.

And yet, when we fail to revisit these traditions, we fail not only God, but we fail our neighbors.

The people in Isaiah's time were only trying to honor God by protecting the SABBATH,

But we can look at this Isaiah text and realize that we are off base.

Here is the continuation of the Isaiah text, Is 58:13-14a:

If you stop trampling the Sabbath,

stop doing whatever you want on my holy day,
and consider the Sabbath a delight,
sacred to the Lord, honored,
and honor it instead of doing things your way,
seeking what you want and doing business as usual,
14 then you will take delight in the Lord.

Trampling the Sabbath means you are “doing whatever you want”
You are called to “HONOR” the Sabbath, instead of “doing things your way”
Or doing “business as usual”

These days we worship on the Sabbath. We praise God on Sunday. And Jesus healed on the Sabbath.
What is the right thing?

The Gospel will always be the Gospel. The Good News will always be the Good News.

The Good News doesn't need our help. Instead, we take it for a ride our whole lives long.

When it comes to doing ministry, we find where our passions and the world's hunger meet.
And we take one step that direction. And we re-evaluate. And we try again.

May you seek to let the Gospel drive your decisions this day and every day
With your faith community, with your family, and with the strangers you encounter this day.

AMEN.