

## **Pentecost 21B – Lectionary 28 – 10/13/2024**

Jesus has been and continues to be very pointed in what he is trying to teach. He is trying to prepare his disciples for his pending death and resurrection. Everyone seems to have their own idea of what the kingdom of God is supposed to look like.

Jesus says it is very hard to enter the kingdom of God. He told them it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Most of us know what it is like to put a piece of thread through the eye of a needle.

The disciples were greatly astounded and said to one another then how do we get in, how can we be saved? Jesus basically said that they can't that only God can and will do this. For God, all things are possible.

The Gospel lesson began with a man running up to Jesus and kneeling before him and asking, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, why do you call me good? No one is good, but God alone. You know the commandments: You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'

The man then said, Teacher I have kept all of these since I was a child. Jesus looked at him with love and said. You lack one thing, go and sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, then come and follow me. The man was shocked by this response and went away very sad, for he had many possessions.

Human beings in the time of the Bible, had been continually getting off track of what God's kingdom was meant to be. The man's possessions were standing in the way of focusing on following Jesus. Jesus was on earth to once again define the kingdom of God. Yes God had given the ten commandments, but they were meant as guidelines.

As I have said before, the commandments were not given for people to have power and control over people. This man was rich in possessions and Jesus was telling him that they were obstacles for him in following Jesus. Above all, Jesus was working on creating a new community.

Anytime the word new comes into play, it does mean change. Something that is old will need to be let go of in order for new to occur. In systems, such as the church, it normally means that something in the system needs to change in order for newness or growth to happen.

This will create uncomfortableness because it is not how we have always done it. The first step is allowing ourselves to be open in honestly looking at things, in other words making an assessment. This is what the transition team did last year. They then made recommendations to the congregation council of things that need to be reorganized or addressed.

This will mean change. Some things will remain the same, other things will stop or look different. Room needs to be made for growth to happen. As soon as we say something needs to be a certain way, God often has a way of saying, we'll see. What happens is we allow our fears and uncomfortableness take over and this is when it is difficult to see what God wants.

Eventually there will be a new pastor here. I pray that you will be ready to listen and support their leadership. Remember if you catch yourself saying, "We've never done it that way before", it probably needs to change. I know some of our leadership does think this way.

God's kingdom, this new community that Jesus is trying to describe is one that is not about power and control, but mutuality. Last week and again in today's Gospel lesson we hear that we are to empower the vulnerable. It is what is best for the community of faith, not for individuals.

I want to tell you about how I see this new community being modeled here at Faith. Our Micro Food Pantry is a very important ministry. We had been filling the food boxes twice a day for some time, maybe even close to its inception. A crisis that has been building for a while become evident. We didn't have money to sustain it the way it had been running.

Thus, an assessment was done of the food and its cost. A group met and examined the assessment and 1) it was determined that there was still a real need for it in our community, 2) In order to keep it up and running, changes needed to be made.

For a week or two we had stopped buying food until we could have this meeting and develop a plan for right now, in order to keep filling the boxes. It was decided that the boxes would be filled once a day instead of twice. Before we met again, people were brainstorming and developing plans to fund this ministry.

We met again and we are working on different avenues of funding. In the next couple of months, you will be presented with different ways that you can help support this ministry. I do want to thank you all of you for already supporting this ministry, because in some way everyone here has supported this ministry. It is this kind of work that models the new community that Jesus is talking about.

One other sign of this new community that Jesus is talking about is when Raymond joined our Worship and Music committee meeting and presented the idea of Visitors Sunday. The committee listened to this excitement to invite others to worship with us and introduce them to our family.

Raymond had ideas for worship that the committee heard, and we are working at implementing them. This is building this new community that Jesus is talking about. Every community of faith needs new life as this is when people want to join and be part of it.

This new community that Jesus is talking about is seen here at Faith. The building of this new community will continue to take stepping back and being willing to be honest with what is working and what is not working. This is called assessment.

From here it will take openness to new ideas and letting go of some things. Without this openness, this new community that Jesus is asking you to build will not grow. What we have heard today in our Gospel lesson is that we are called to let go of those things that we are holding on to too tightly. Those are things that are holding us back from following Jesus.

Jesus wants our attention now! Sometime in the near future, there will be more changes here. Eventually I will move on, and you will have a new pastor. Jesus challenges you and I to stay focused on him and keep our eyes and ears open. Be ready to let go of things in order to follow him.

The good news in all of this letting go and struggling with it, is that Jesus loves us through all of it. We are not alone. Jesus walks beside us.

Let us pray, Gracious God, we struggle with change. We struggle with being honest about what is working and what is not working. May your Spirit help us to have open hearts and minds. We desire to do your work and grow your community. Help us to identify and let go of those things that are getting in the way of doing your will. Thank you for your grace as we strive to do your will.

We humbly acknowledge that this is your kingdom and not ours. In Jesus, name, Amen.