

Ordination Service
Sunday, June 7, 2009
Bishop Julius C. Trimble

One Step Beyond Caution

Some prayers are meant to be repeated over and over. Some sermons.....Fred Craddock was asked, "should we repeat our sermons?" Yes...The problem is that some sermons should have never been preached the first time.

The Lord's Prayer...."Thy Kingdom Come thy will be done.....over and over...."

Annual conference is in part, an act of remembering from which we came, a holy reminder that there were conferences before this one. We repeat, annually, Christian conferencing, believing that the Power behind us, before us and beside us is greater than the task before us.

Biblically, we could say, "Bishop, you refer to the Holy Spirit and our Pentecost roots in Acts 1 & 2." Yes, but, also, our Wesleyan roots. John Wesley was pessimistic about the power and entanglement of sin, but optimistic, because of our unlimited possibilities, in response to God's grace. The entanglement of sin has toxic results in societies today where greed begets worker abuse, investor and abuse. Protracted armed conflicts and neglect of the common good. Institutions and individuals in every age weakened by the pull of sin and compromised by inner voices and repeated messages that tell us that the only one who is important is you and those you know and love.

Yet, there is a greater need for us to recapture Wesley's optimism and passion rooted in God's grace. **God's grace is sufficient.** As mother Simmons used to remind me as a young pastor, "***We can't do God's work without God's power, God's Love....God's grace is sufficient.***"

Romans 5:20 "The strength of sin is overcome by the power of God's love, mercy and forgiveness."

Charles Wesley captured the power of God's redemptive grace in the Hymn, "***O, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great redeemers praise
The glories of my God and King
The triumphs of his grace!***"

God comes before us and remains with us, that the work of salvation may become a reality and that transformed lives, in Christ, may avail themselves for the work of transforming the world.

God comes to us first. This is the significance of prevenient Grace. Before a Bishop ever lays hands on your head God has already laid hands on your head and heart.

Matthew 16:24-26, ***The Cost and Promise Of Discipleship! Matthew omits crowds introduced by Mark, making this passage clearly focused on the Disciples and the meaning of Discipleship, for those already in the community.***

So you want to give your life to this movement? These words are not an invitation to those considering Christian Discipleship (outsiders).

More accurate, if anyone would come after me. You won't be able to play it safe. The one who tries to play it safe loses their life.

This was probably written during some of the worst days of persecution.

Today, in Iowa, it is not a case of Martyrdom that is associated with cost and promise of Discipleship, but meaningful servant leadership that invites us to take God's

love serious enough to step beyond the shallow waters of *"Church as we know it"*. Serious enough to trust God for God's part and trust ourselves for our part. Serious enough to listen to Jesus say to us, our personal happiness is not the dominant principle.

Give Jesus your whole life! Neglect family no way, Ignore the laughter and tears, joys and fears of real life in real time? Not at all!

DO away with aspirations to own nice things or travel to far away places...Give you whole life to Jesus! Your living and your leadership your efforts and your excellence, sacrifice and sweat, devotion and your disappointments.

Star Trek.....great movie (the current one) Leonard Nimoy says to himself (the current Spock), *"when you eliminate the impossible, what remains may just be the truth"*.

John 1:17, "The Law was given through Moses. Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." I do not believe we have exhausted the truth this day an hour. Jesus shows us how God's love can be shared in a way that transforms lives.

Jesus says, if you are willing to follow me....our lives must be traded in for a life willing to take **"a step beyond caution"**.

When Saint Augustine gave communion in North Africa in the 5th century, he would say *"Receive what you are"....Not what you may become, you already are the body of Christ the Church....You who will have hands layed upon you and prayed over, co-laborers in the Gospel, ...Are the Body of Christ."*

Receive what you are and then take "a step beyond caution":

Caution limits difficult questions, avoids all conflict, preaches only favorite text and avoids the lectionary. Caution encourages you to engage in acts of mercy, while avoiding the call for justice. Caution keeps you from risking the vulnerability that comes with building true friendships and having real accountability with colleagues and laypersons. God will privilege you to love.

Caution will keep you from doing some things you should not do, and some things maybe you should do. Somebody has to say,

- **it's not right** to ignore the world outside our doors.
- **It's not right** for children to be hungry in Uganda or neglected in Iowa.
- **It's not right** for Malaria to cause thousands of preventable deaths in Sierra Leone or for homes to go boarded up indefinitely in Cedar Rapids.

Caution may corral you into places of invisibility when God wants you to help others let there light shine!

They cautioned Jesus that the crowd was too big and too hungry. He said fed them.

They cautioned Jesus he should watch the company he keeps, Tax collectors, Samaritan Women, Lepers. He said just watch me.

They cautioned Jesus that there were appointments to be made and legislation to be debated, no time for an African Children's Choir. *"Let the children come"*.

There is a danger in being too cautious. We don't want to fail. We don't want risk being misunderstood. So the gift of our best selves sometimes is withheld. You are not called to save the world or save the church. We are called to let our lights shine.

My Lutheran neighbors...."God does not call the qualified. God qualifies the called."

Howard Thurman: ***"There is in every one of us something that waits and listens for the sound of the Genuine in ourselves, and is the only true guide you'll ever have. And if you cannot hear it, you will all of your life spend your days on the end of strings that somebody else pulls."***

Don't ask God for more faith. Get to Know God better. And because God is faithful, the better you know God, the more you will trust God. Let me close with a biblical scene from the Old Testament.

Exodus 3:10-14, Moses questions his own authority and lack of credentials....I know you will be with me, but God, there are some questions that will surely be asked.. For example, the Israelites will ask who has sent me and what is this God of our ancestor's name? *"I Am that I am. Tell them I Am has sent you!"*

Rev. James Moore....writes that this familiar scene more accurately translated, Not I am, but "I Shall Be There".

- ***When the voice of fear is speaking louder than faith, God says, "I Shall be There".***
- ***When the questions loom larger than easy answers, God's name is I shall be there.***
- ***When the medical test reveal unwanted news, God says, "My name is I Shall be There".***
- ***When it is time to move and friends seem distant, God says, "I shall be there".***

- *When people want to label me, or limit me or lessen the importance of the day the Lord has made, God says, "I shall be there!"*
- *When you stand in the gap for sick and for the oppressed; when you lift a word of Hope for God's people; while you need a word of encouragement..... God's name is I shall be there!*