

Sermon

September 22, 2019 Year C

Saint Mark's Episcopal Church, Charleston, SC

The Reverend Dr. Philip C. Linder

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Is it possible for you today not to be anxious; it is not so easy in 2019. Can you take hold and wrap your arms around those things in your life that matter and will endure? And what did it mean when Jesus said, "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much..."

I spend entirely too much time reading, watching, and digesting our nation and world's daily news. And these days it really is not good for you. I find myself in the struggle between wanting to be well informed about the challenges that presently lie before us, and the desire not to be in an anxious state, but rather in one that is holy and peaceful. Does this sound familiar to you? Can you relate?

All of the places that we search out, that are other than the God of the universe ultimately come up leaving us wanting, frustrated, and perhaps even anxious. The human mind and condition brings us to many places as we search for meaning and purpose for the experiences of our lives. The larger question though for all of us is the universal and eternal one: “What is the meaning of life?” And, perhaps the better question is: “What gives your life meaning?” The former Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, wrote in his book, Why I Believe in a Personal God, the following: “Meaning and value in ordinary life we can accept and understand. Such experiences and relationships make our existence valuable. But is there value and meaning in the universe itself? Can it be that it has been created by a Maker who loves us eternally and who pours meaning into this mysterious creation?” The gospel answer, Jesus’ answer, is yes.

So, who is Jesus? Is he above all else in your life—above your work, accomplishments, relationships, political persuasions, and all other interests? This is the question that Jesus asks in today’s wonderful “Parable of the Rich Man and the Manager;” where are you faithful? Today, even more than yesterday, this question should be central to all other questions. Who is Jesus in your life?

A simple yet profound answer which God wants all of us to come to is: Jesus is my life; the one I serve daily in thought, word and action; the one who I spend time in prayerful conversation with each day, who listens like no other and in whom I trust with my innermost thoughts and feelings. You see, God wants the teachings, compassion, acceptance, and love of Jesus Christ to be the essence, the very center of your life. And, this is so true for our community of faith at Saint Mark's.

It is no mere coincidence that as Episcopalians, we celebrate the Holy Eucharist 52 Sundays a year. We are a sacramental Church. The Eucharist is the sacrament commanded by Christ for the continual remembrance of his life, death and resurrection until his coming again. Our prayer: "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again," proclaims what was, what is and what will be. Through the grace of this sacrament we receive forgiveness of our sins, a foretaste of God's heavenly banquet and the strengthening of our union with Jesus Christ. With outstretched hands we receive life itself, both now and eternally.

There are many parts to each of our lives—vocation, family, friends, and our particular interests. These are not bad things, on the contrary they are often really good things that add depth and meaning to our lives. However, Jesus asks to take precedence

over them. Jesus asserts that He is the true food and true drink. It was early in the second century, that Saint Ignatius described the Eucharist as “the medicine of immortality and the antidote that we should not die but live forever in Jesus Christ.”

Jesus never called us to a privatized faith, but rather into a community of believers, the Church. It is within the Church that we identify with Christ and receive him into our lives. By your attendance and belonging you witness that Jesus is central to our life.

Back in 1990, at a White House breakfast for religious leaders, President Bush the elder, told the story of a little boy who offered up this simple prayer: “God bless Mama and Daddy, my brother and sister, and God do take care of yourself because if anything happens to you, we’re all sunk.” Well, that is for sure! Who is Jesus?” He is our life, without whom we are sunk. May we together at Saint Mark’s embrace all of Jesus to meet the challenges that now await us...

