

Sermon

Pentecost 3 June 30, 2019

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.

My beloved companion and dog Maggie is now heading toward her 13th year of life. We have had her for six and a half-years of that life, as we adopted her at age six from a shelter in Lexington, Kentucky. Maggie, a mix of black Labrador Retriever and Rhodesian Ridgeback, has been the perfect dog and companion. The best ever! She is very smart, was very strong, and totally loving and loyal. Maggie came into my life when I really needed her. If you have been fortunate enough to have such a companion dog, then you know. Want to know what God's unconditional love is like...then look to this kind of dog. Which, dog by the way, is God spelled backwards. Coincidence, well maybe?

Throughout her years with me, Maggie has followed me everywhere I go. When I would ride the mower on our farm in Versailles, Kentucky, Maggie would spend the day out there with me as we made sure those 11 acres were mowed, in good shape, and that the horses were well cared for, fed, and happy. I often miss those bluegrass Kentucky days, but more than that I miss the fact that Maggie is no longer that healthy, young, and vibrant gal that used to run alongside me in the pastures. Maggie followed me wherever I would go, and that is not so easy for her these days.

“As they were going along the road, someone said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have their nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’” This exchange in the passage from the 9th chapter of Luke’s Gospel between Jesus and another, is both profound and emotional. We hear in the words of Jesus a kind of sadness that he cannot find that place of home and peace. And we hear of an individual, so taken with Jesus, that he will follow him wherever he goes. And I believe from my personal Christian journey, as well as listening to the stories of so many in my ministry, that this is a somewhat universal experience; wanting to follow Jesus and yet like Jesus, not ever finding that place of rest

and peace we so desire. So, what are we to do in the midst of it all?

We, as Saint Paul reminds us in his Letter to the Galatians, are to love like Jesus. “For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Galatians 5) You see, the only way that we will ever find true rest and peace in this life, the only way that we may authentically follow Jesus, is love our neighbor as ourselves...to love like Jesus. Perhaps, our Lord could never find rest because he himself was the source of that peace and rest. Jesus was carrying forth the monumental task and mission to bring others to an understanding of that love of God, which had the effect of bringing individuals like you and me to want to follow.