

Sermon

“The Place of My Resurrection”

A Sermon for Cary Presbyterian Church

Sunday, September 4, 2022

All Saints

Luke 14:25 Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, 26 “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. 27 Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ 31 Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. 33 So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

Jer. 18:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 “Come, go down to the potter’s house, and there I will let you hear my words.” 3 So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. 4 The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

Jer. 18:5 Then the word of the LORD came to me: 6 Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the LORD. Just like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. 7 At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, 8 but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. 9 And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, 10 but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good

that I had intended to do to it. 11 Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the LORD: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.

- I. In the memory of the Hebrew scripture the terrible crisis of 587 BCE looms very large.**
 - A. The Babylonian sacking of Jerusalem and deportation of the elite class of citizens to Babylon is seared into Israel’s memory as if by branding iron.**
 - B. In that calamity we lost:**
 - 1. Our king**
 - 2. Our Temple**
 - 3. Our Holy City**
 - 4. Our wealth**
 - 5. Our autonomy**
 - C. And the big theological questions....**
 - “Have we lost our God?”**
 - “Has God given up on us?”**
 - “Is it too late?”**

- II. In answer to the last of those questions**
 - A. Jeremiah *mostly* indicates it is too late.**
 - 1. Poetry, by and large, says we’re past potential for redemption.**
 - B. But sometimes there are oracles which offer hope for change...**
 - 1. Today’s poem from chapter 18 is one of those.**

- III. Go to the potter’s house and I will say something**

- A. Jeremiah watches as potter works and reworks clay.**
- B. God says, “It is like that with you too.”**
 - 1. There is still an opportunity to influence the will of the potter to make something new/else!**
- C. As the potter’s wheel turns . . . *turn* from your sin and choose to walk in humility before God.**
 - 1. Turn *from***
 - † **injustice, violence, self-serving, self-righteous, self centered ways of living...**
 - 2. Turn *to***
 - † **A life of fidelity to God**
 - † **A neighborly life**
 - † **A just life**
 - † **A loving life**

Thus says the LORD: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.

IV. Both Jesus in Luke, and Jeremiah today make it clear that we have choices to make *that matter*.

- A. Living into those choices which align with God’s will has never been easy.**
 - 1. Not easy because we are prone to selfishness**
 - 2. Not easy because we live in a world which holds different values inconsistent with the heart of God.**
- B. So we make our choice to turn away from a world of self-serving hate and toward a kingdom of God**

on earth as it is in heaven — and we do that not alone but *together*.

1. It takes a village to raise a child of God.

- V. So we gather each Lord's Day to be reminded of our calling to "turn"
- A. We gather in the presence of scripture which challenges us with the truth and the urgency of our life before God — reminds us of our choices.
 - B. We gather at the Table of God's grace to receive gifts to sustain us on the journey ...
 - C. We gather at the font to baptize another child of God and to promise to participate in both teaching the faith and learning the faith from the one we baptize.

VI. So as we come to the Table and as we gather at the font let us recall the basic imperative — Turn.

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where I ought to be;
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed;
to turn, turn, will be my delight.
Till by turning, turning we come round right.*

— Joseph Brackett Jr. (1797-1882)