

**Coop's Scoops # 43: Sunday Sermon, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**Today's Readings:**

Acts 1: 6-14 Psalm 68:1-10, 1 Peter 4:12-14;5:6-11

**The Holy Gospel:** John 17: 1-20

**The Collect for Seventh Sunday of Easter:**

Almighty God, you have exalted your only son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your Kingdom in Heaven,. Mercifully give us faith to know that, as He promised, He abides with us on earth to the end of time; who is alive and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

***Sermon: So Send I you!***

Just before the events which led to His betrayal and crucifixion, our Lord Jesus Christ spent time, much time, praying with His Father. And this time was not spent in the agony of impending death, such as He spent in the Garden of Gethsemene. This time was spent praying for His friends. Praying for the rag-tag, stumbling, loving, learning bunch of men to whom He would soon be entrusting His mission.

Earlier in His ministry, Jesus had sent His disciples out two by two to teach and heal and proclaim the Gospel. And they had done wonderfully, coming back full of exciting stories and great praise. He commended them. Yet, this was but a trial run for the events we read about today. For Jesus was still here. Still on this earth. Still available to encourage, teach, rebuke and love His followers. How different is the prayer for His friends today.

“Father, I will no longer be in the world, but these remain here. While I was with them, I kept them safe in your name. I have given them your

Word. They have received it, and are hated by the world because they are no longer like those in the world. Please keep them safe and protect them from the evil one” So prays our Lord for the twelve and so prays our Lord for us. “I pray not for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as we are one.”

The mission which God entrusted to Jesus... bringing His kingdom to the earth, setting free the captive, liberating the poor, bringing salvation and healing...this same mission Jesus is entrusting to his friends. Have you ever wondered if it may not have been better if Jesus had never ascended from the earth at all? If He had stayed here and put things to right Himself? His friends, you see, have not always done such a marvelous job of it.

Jesus knew it would be tough. Yet, it was the will of the Father that His children take over the mission of the Christ. “As the Father has sent Me, so send I you”. When Jesus departed from the earth, He left behind the keys of the kingdom in often fumbling hands. It was the Father’s plan that His well-loved created and redeemed children would, through the choice of love and obedience, carry on with the mission of the Saviour. There was no back up plan. Sounds kind of like things we face today, when we feel inadequate, doesn’t it? Covid brings a lot of “What nows? What do we do? Whys?..” And yet, even if everything else changes....our leaders, our buildings, our liturgies, our songs, our gatherings ...one thing remains the same forever, and that is our mission. I love how author Philip Yancy describes what that is. He writes “Jesus left few traces of Himself on earth..He penned no books or instructions, He did not leave a home or even belongings, he did not marry, settle down and start a dynasty. We would, in fact, know nothing about Him except for the traces He left in His friends. That was His design. The Law and the prophets had focused like a beam of light on the One who

was to come, and now that light, as if hitting a prism, would fracture and shoot out in a human spectrum of waves and colors.” A human spectrum of real people with real names doing God’s continuing work. People are, in some mysterious way, God in disguise. God has not absconded from the planet, but rather has taken on a most unlikely disguise of the stranger, the poor, the hungry, the prisoner, the sick, the ragged ones of the earth as well as the faithful ones who love them and tend them. Mother Teresa, speaking to a wealthy and dubious western journalist, pointed out that her order was a contemplative one. “We focus our hearts and minds on Jesus, and then we go out and **look for Him in disguise**” was how she described her work with the poorest and most desperate of all people in the streets of Calcutta.

The Mission of Christ has now been in the hands of everyday Christians for almost two thousand years. How have we done? There is no lack of cynicism about the Church. Think of the Inquisition, the forced baptisms of thousands under penalty of death, the violence perpetrated in the name of Christ, the mixed messages, hypocrisy and heresies...and the everyday stinging arrows of neglect, abuse and unholiness. There have been, and continue to be, great failures. But then, think also about the disciples of the first century and the martyrs of last week who gave their very lives, of Mother Teresa and her Home for the Dying, of Wilberforce freeing the slaves, General Booth establishing an army of Salvation, Dorothy Day feeding the hungry, our Primate working tirelessly to effect truth and reconciliation with indigenous peoples. And think of Michael Angelo, Bach and Rembrandt and Pasteur and Newton, all toiling for the glory of God. There have been, and continue to be, great successes. And not many of the failures or successes involve famous folk. When I fail to love or choose to sin or become complacent, I have failed to fulfil the mission entrusted to me.

When I choose to love, especially when it is a costly love, especially when it requires my total dependence on God just to do it...then I have done well. Weighing our failures and our successes would be entirely futile...we scarcely know our own hearts at times....the final word will come from God alone.

Jesus knew that people would fail; it did not divert Him from trusting them. Trusting us. For He knew also that, filled with His Spirit, we would try, we would embrace loving, we would be constant in prayer, we would place ourselves at His disposal...we would do all these things in very human, and therefore often inconsistent and incomplete, ways. Paul wrote to the church of Corinth, “ We have this treasure ( our MISSION) in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power comes from God and not from us”. Jars of clay. Easily broken. But also easily shaped. And easily repaired by the Master Potter, with a healthy application of Spirit and of water. There is no hopeless case. Everything and everyone is redeemable, “fixable” through the power of the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel entrusted to us. The good news that Jesus, who knows us through and through, also chose to love us and to trust us to get it right with His help. **So like the ad says, folks, let’s “Just Do It!” And “Do it Again!” Amen.**

Judie+

May the Lord bless you and keep you, May the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you, May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.