

JULY 7, 2019 SUMMARY SERMON - JOHN TSCHUDY

SCRIPTURE LESSONS GALATIANS 6:1-16, Luke 10:1-20

I probably shouldn't say this but our Gospel Lesson provides a wonderful text to give to certain people that come to your door to "witness for Jesus." Jesus is sending out the disciples and some others as people to spread the Gospel message. Notice the instructions he gives to them about how they are to conduct themselves and what they are to carry. How does it compare to the people at your door? Just a thought.

In general, this text should remind us of how we are to teach others about Jesus' way to proclaim the Gospel and how we are being offered the gift of salvation. Remember if we claim the Name of Christian we are representing the Rule of God in the World. Again, being a Christian isn't just about what happens after we die. It is also about the living of our earthly life following God's way in this world and being a representative of and witness to God's way. Because we believe that living as God calls us to willingly make this world a better place to live.

Which leads us to Paul's text from Galatians. If you notice the title in your scripture reading, this section of scripture is called "Bear One Another's Burden." This goes back to the idea found throughout the Gospel and the writings of Paul, God calls us to love one another no matter who we are and treat others the way we want to be treated. The key to a Christian's life is the relationship we have with God and others. How we treat others is part of our witness to God and Christ's way. Do we have the Faith to trust in God to help us as we help others and help them carry the burdens they have to carry. That according to Paul is a part of the commands of Jesus, the expectations of Jesus has for all his followers. Our call is not to judge others but rather judge ourselves and make sure we are living up to the expectations God has for us by putting our Faith in God and following the Holy Spirit, within us. This is true as individuals or as a country.

God's way of living is fair and just. We get out of life what we are willing to put into it. If all we put into our lives in the world are the things valued in the world then that maybe all we get out of eternity. Perhaps this explains why our world seems so messed up. What are we putting into it? What are our leaders putting into our country? Is our treatment of others giving witness to God's love and concern for all people? Or is it a witness to us wanting to get the most for ourselves out of the world those things the world values? Can we expect to get the "Fruit of the Spirit" out of a world where we sow anger, fear, hatred, denying the needs of others, especially those most in need? Are we working for the good of all or only ourselves? God calls us to reach out and help all others and our needs will be met.

It is interesting to me that Paul emphasizes that he alone is responsible for writing these words. He is personally conveying this message of God to the followers of Jesus in Galatia and doing so because he believes it is important. He is challenging the religious leaders of his day who believe that the religious symbols of that day were the most important thing about following God. In this case being circumcised for the Jewish leaders was the most important thing because that symbolizes you were a Jew. Such rules or symbols according to Paul are not important yet many traditions continue to insist on certain behavior and regulations.

For Paul the most important thing is Christ being crucified and resurrected for us and thus making possible a new creation that we live in and that changes everything. This new creation isn't about "Pie-in-the-sky bye and bye." It is about living our lives in this world by Faith in God, loving God and our neighbor. What makes a person or a nation Christian isn't the symbols they value, or the rituals they celebrate with. It is the witness they bear to the world about how God has called them to live as they love God and love their neighbor as themselves. Instead of judging others by the religion they claim, the color of their skin, the language they speak, perhaps we need to look at ourselves as individuals and as a nation and ask how are we doing in living up to God's standards? Are we bearing the burden of others and helping those in need or just looking out for ourselves? What do we value most, serving God or ourselves? We are called to love God and our neighbors and have faith that God will take care of us, in the Name of Jesus Christ.