

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church

Pinole CA

The Fourth Sunday After Pentecost

June 28, 2020

“Throwing a Brick”

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good Morning, good to see all of you, well, maybe the Hollywood Squares you. So our Gospel reading today has Jesus talking about hospitality, which when viewed by our current situation of corona virus lockdown may leave you wondering how this applies to you. But trust me, it applies to you and these times more than ever.

To fully appreciate how Jesus has gotten to this place of hospitality where it becomes imperative to offer a cup of water, we have to look at the whole sequence of Matthew 10.

In Matthew 10 Jesus first summons the twelve disciples and gives them healing powers and authority over unclean spirits. He then gives them orders to go among the people to heal, preach, and teach. He warns them they will face persecution while trying to do good, explaining as a way of reassurance that people may want to kill the body but it is God who has power over the soul. He then assures them of God's love and promises to acknowledge to God anyone who knows Him, explaining that his ways will not bring peace.

All of this makes following Jesus sound like spiritual war zone, and the risk is to your very soul. Maybe some of you are feeling like this today. Worried that your soul is at risk, or your faith is being tested. How do we put the gifts God has given us to work in a time of isolation? Why are we persecuted for caring enough about others to wear a mask and social-distance? Why is there tension among family

members over political views that are morally destructive? and how do we keep a church running when we are not physically open for services?

It all boils down to doing at least the littlest thing you can do, as Jesus describes our duty to at least give a cup of cold water to someone in need with a blessing. The “little ones” Jesus refers to are frequently the scapegoats or victims in our society. They are the powerless, the weak, the hurting, the abused, the abandoned, the elderly, or children, and they are often the easiest targets for our wrath. They are also the easiest to “not see.” Too often we are privileged to the point of being able to turn the away, not even offer the least we can.

I’m going to share a recent story of what this Gospel looks like today, and I hope you find this inspiring.

As you know I work with some amazing nurses known for their generosity and caring nature. God has given them the true gift of healing. Well, sometimes we forget who we really are and how we are called, because we get caught up in our head, or our philosophy, or the fear that evil likes to feed on.

Anyway, one of our hospice nurses was driving her new car through downtown Oakland a few weeks ago, right in the middle of the protests when a boy tried to flag her down. She was done with her shift, she was tired, and we had been warned to be “careful out there” and she didn’t want to get involved, so she pretended she didn’t see the boy. But we never know when prophets or angels will come to make sure we heed God’s call to serve, because she needed to slow down and stop for a red traffic light. Just as she put the brakes on she

heard a loud crash and realized someone had thrown a brick at her new car, denting the trunk.

She became so angry she forgot to be scared and she jumped out of her car and grabbed the boy who had thrown the brick. He was young, probably twelve or so, an African American young man. Our nurse in the story here is Filipino and considered herself quite aware of her own biases, but in the heat of the moment, she yelled, “You juvenile delinquent! You’ll pay for this or go to jail!” My nursing friend had made a judgment and promoted herself to judge and jury.

“I’m sorry, mam,” the boy started crying. “My mom’s lying on the floor in our apartment. I think she’s dying. Our phone’s been cut off and I’ve been trying for ten minutes to get someone to stop. I didn’t know what else to do! Take me to jail if you have to, but please, call a doctor for my mom first.”

Well, filled with shame she admitted “I’m a nurse,” and she asked, “Where is she?” The boy took her to his mother and the nurse administered CPR and called an ambulance.

“Will she live?” the boy sobbed. “Yes, it looks like it. Good save” said the EMT as they loaded the woman on the ambulance. The boy turned to the nurse and said, “My mom is going to live. It’s worth going to jail. I’m sorry I ruined your car. You can take me in now.”

The nurse replied “You’re not going anywhere except to someone who can watch you until your mother is OK. It was my fault you had to throw a brick to get my attention.” Long story short, the boy went to stay with an auntie. Stopping the car and listening to this young boy was the least this nurse was called to do.

We are called by God into the service of humanity. That is the call, period. It may be using your cell phone, your computer, donating money, stopping when approached by someone in desperation – or maybe putting a bottle of water on the stoop for your delivery people.

We are called to the call – not the judgment. We are called to be open to opportunity when it presents itself, as we may be entertaining angels, prophets, or another disciple of God. We never know when that opportunity may present itself. We need to address our fears, our prejudices, our reasons for not doing the most with what God has given us.

The call for service is not an easy call. Jesus has told us, some will welcome us, some will not. Some will argue with us, others may even want to cause us harm, but we do this because Jesus has called us to walk a path of love.

We are called to the practice of Namaste – I see and honor the God in you, please see and honor the God in me. People's souls have no color, no specific faith tradition, and all are worthy of love – in whatever way is appropriate for the situation. For when you are welcoming, caring, loving, you are in service to God. You are serving Jesus.

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church may not have the doors open, but we, the church, are hard at work. In case you have not been following what we are doing – what cup of water we have been offering – here is a small preview.

We have put together a regathering team and the vestry is scheduling painting, landscaping, and deep cleaning. We are discussing, outside, inside, and video aspects of worship we may be offering. We are going to put up banners and an outside prayer station. Christ the Lord Church is working.

Each and every one of you have been calling each other; we have come together to bring meals to those in need, and comfort to those who are lonely. You have shared time on the phone, or taken part in drive-by parades for those who are celebrating milestones in this unprecedented time.

Our Gospel of Matthew has prepared us. Jesus has taught us with his words, and showed us by the giving of his life – that we are worth God’s love and forgiveness and with that grace we are called to serve. It is my hope that you will start an email trail and include as many members as you can. Let us share the “cup of water” we are serving our members and communities. Let’s live the Gospel and share.

If you are getting antsy at home, some work projects at the church are going to need volunteers, as well as some funding, some organization, and some warm hearts to prepare for our future with a good strong building, an electronic worship base, and the hope and faith that can move mountains – or at the least maybe furniture.

Thank you for your pledges, your church is alive and working, and if you feel you need more participation in whatever form works for you contact Ann, Sandy, or me.

It is my hope you don’t need a brick thrown at you to open your eyes to the calling to serve. You may be helping future angels or prophets. And with that I say: **Amen.**