

Pentecost – Proper 5 June 11, St. Gabe's

From the Collect: O God, from whom **ALL GOOD** *proceeds*:

From the Psalm (33 1 -12)

Rejoice, Praise, Sing – those are the first words in the first 3 verses of the psalm.

From **Genesis**: I will bless you, and make your name great, so that **YOU will be a blessing**.

From **Romans**: Hoping against hope

And all this before the Gospel. The gospel about the wretched tax collector and a somewhat superstitious woman, saying 'if I only.... If I only touch his cloak' ---- and a girl who got up ! as Jesus took her by the hand.

Follow me.

...

That's a lot – a lot for any time – but surely for a Sunday morning as the smoke from the forest fires finally has dissipated from Birdsboro.... Andand....

So – back to the collect.....

O God, from whom **ALL GOOD** *proceeds*:

[Grant that by **your inspiration** we may think those things that are right, and by your merciful guiding may **do them**....]

How **do we** ? ..think those things that are right – when in our culture or our belief systems or the mores, as they call them, the essential characteristic customs and conventions of a community – are sometimes influencing us in the **WRONG** direction – not the right one, or the kind one.

I call this kind of learning – “CAVEmen Mentality” – I say this especially when things seem to be running amuck. I mean that cave people learned by association of actions from nature- sometimes these occurrences had nothing to do with one another. This can be how we learn things the wrong way, how

we associate incorrectly, and demonstrates how it can be difficult to make the learning right.

Not a cave man or a cave woman, - - but far, far more advanced - Abram, and Sara, show us how a trust in God began – God showed them and all the nations followed, except when they didn't. Please take note of the altar Abram built, and notice our altar where we break bread. And those who were here last week, think of Cora hugging the tree, when you contemplate a wooden altar. Those who were NOT here last week, ask someone to tell you the story, perhaps adding to it that we know trees have vibrations – vibrations of life – a communication in God's kingdom.

Today, we have a baptism – an event for which we are thrilled, knowing our responsibility. We make community and individual promises - to the child, godparents and parents – to support them. It always fascinates me how surprised the young adults are when they become more and more aware during preparation and rehearsal, that **WE** really mean the support we claim for the newly baptized and for them. It also is precious – when these adults realize the depth of their promises – and when they deny evil. Sometimes they are eager, sometimes, wary..... sometimes shy – of course, they ARE center stage....for a sacramental act. Baptism comes with a lot of history. It is hoping against hope.

So, today, I thought I would tell you how, as a young-er person, how I developed my tax collector image and why, likely, I frowned and rebelled when tax collectors were presented in the bible as being deceitful, bad, and dishonest. Of course, I did not understand the history of tax collectors, or the Roman empire, for that matter. I was not raised in a feudal society.

In direct contrast, I was given a lot of freedom amidst high expectations for behavior and kindness to others. That did not mean that if I took a daffodil from one person's garden, particularly on May Day - and put in on the doorstep of another person – rang the bell and then hid behind a tree – that the neighbor's did not know I was doing just that. Ha/ha. It is not that I did not get caught – it is that they loved it!.. I learned that years later. So in this idyllic situation, one of my mother's dearest friends, Katie, was the borough's tax collector. And I adored her. She had twinkly eyes, thin reddish, curly hair, and

wore substantial shoes because she liked to take walks. Later, I learned she was a darn good bridge player. I knew that her first husband and father of Clyde Wood, her only, wonderful son, was a war hero. She was a Methodist, so considered a bit straight-laced – but that did not seem to interfere with a long term relationship with Mr. Stott, whom she eventually married.

Katie's mother, Mrs. Lipka, a widow, was one of the recipients of those May day flowers; she grew beautiful nasturtiums. Mrs. Lipka would put the surprise flower from her doorstep in a bud vase in the window by the porch. She also made amazing apple pie/tart.

I now understand that all tax collectors, all business owners, all teachers, all doctors, all lawyers, all priests and deacons, all of anything, are not all bad or all good. You know that, too. The TV series, The Chosen, portrays Matthew as things were in the days of Jesus. But I believe our society still clumps peoples and careers and politics – and pits one against another. We need to be careful of generalizations – like I did a moment ago with the Methodists, I generalized – but, back in my day, they were actually not allowed to play cards on Sundays!! And I was not allowed to wear pants.

Generalizations are not what God asks us to do. Rather, Jesus told us to love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind. And to love our neighbor as ourself.

God knows we try.

In fact, it is clear, God/Jesus knew Matthew had a role within the community of the disciples..... And...

Jesus easily recognized the desperation and faithfulness of the hemorrhaging woman. He always knows us, the depth of us, our fears, our need for healing, our love and our having trouble, loving.

So we tell stories – preach from the pulpit and preach to each other. We come here for community, understanding, and giving. Being relatively new to this community, I am very aware of all you give – and all you are **asked** to give. I marvel at you – and all the goings on, here at St Gabriels.

Each service has it's own flavor – with continuity of worship, variety with the church seasons, and the various kinds of sharing in the work of liturgy, which is the work of you, the people. And all of this is for our mission in the world.

---The second verse of the psalm says:

Praise the LORD with the harp; *
play to him upon the psalter and lyre.

Jake, I think this speaks to you – and the choir, out in the pews this time of the year – worshipping – and singing with us – giving depth and power in pockets of space in the congregation, – Aren't you glad when a choir member or two are singing right near you? It is easier to keep tune.

To the family of the soon -to-be-baptized. I hope you find comfort in the stories of today, especially the psalm. I hope you feel love from the congregation, and joy in the singing. Children learn what they live. Do not fret that is simply fool-hearty to praise, sing and rejoice. We all know there are knocks and bruises along the way. However, if a child learns that Jesus loves me, that about covers it.....

As Fr Andrew shared last week, we learn from the mouths of babes.

And now I have a double ending for today's service at the beginning of Ordinary Time... the longest sequential time of the church year.....with lots of fabulous collects and readings.. and prayers...after a very RED Pentecost and a subtle Trinity Sunday. We are green once again.

The first ending is to recognize the motto of the Daughters of the King. In case you do not know DOK is a women's group who vow to pray, serve and do evangelism for the sake of Jesus. They typically wear a silver cross, in the style of a Greek Fleury cross. It is a squatty shape, so you may wonder; I know I did. The motto states: I am one, I am but one, I can not do everything, but I can do something. Show me God what you will have me do.

The second ending is a 'solid-rock' conclusion from the psalm.

But the Lord's **WILL** stands fast forever,
and the designs of **his heart** from age to age.