

Love Divine

12/11/2022

Psalm 146:5-10

Luke 1:46b-55

“For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son that those who believe in him may not perish but have everlasting life.” We all know this verse, even down to the book, chapter, and verse. Additionally we recognize Jesus, the “Son” that is sent, as a fulfillment of images we’ve seen in the past couple weeks, like “a shoot from the stump of Jesse,” “a child that leads with righteousness and justice,” and the like. Often, we hear this verse, and we focus on “the Son” being sent and the salvation we have through this Son. However, for today’s purposes, I want us to keep at the forefront of our minds those first six words: “For God so loved the world,” the very reason that Jesus is sent.

As with any kind of love, this love God has for the world is not loving how the world presently is. Parents ground their children not to be mean, but because they love and want what’s best for their children. Similarly, patriots vote certain people in or out of office so that certain changes are able to happen, so that the city, state, country we love can be better. Whether it’s at a little league or professional game, fans will always yell at the refs for what they feel are bad calls, because they love their team and want justice for the players on that team. This is the kind of love God has for the world. God sees the injustices committed against the widow, the orphan, the poor, the sojourner or “alien,” and more by the rich, the powerful, and others. In response, God sends Jesus to intimately experience and reverse the injustices of this world. That is to say, God loves Creation so much as to want what is best for it and to try to steer it towards a more just and righteous state of being, a “new normal” as I talked about a couple weeks ago. God loves the world so much as to come down, to be born not only as a vulnerable creature, an infant, but to be born to those who are themselves vulnerable, all in seeking justice for Creation, justice about which both the Psalm passage and the Magnificat speak.

Both of today’s selected readings speak of a world where the lowly are lifted up, the powerful are brought low, and justice is known to all, a justice that, as we discussed last week, brings peace and gives hope. This is the “new normal” both passages speak about, a “new normal” given to us by and through the coming Christ child. Bear in mind though, Jesus does not do this all on his own. Rather, Jesus goes ahead of us, walking and showing us “the righteous path,” the way by which we are to live our lives. This “path of righteousness” laid out for us by the Christ child is in fact a way of love: love for neighbor, love for God, and love for all Creation. In other words, God so loved the world, including us, so much that They send us a savior child to show us how to love Creation and one another in the same way.

In walking this “the path of righteousness,” there is fulfillment of what both the Magnificat and the Psalm reading speak. Prisoners, both those physically and mentally arrested, are set free. The hungry are fed. The powerless and lowly are empowered and lifted up, therein bringing the wicked to ruin. In short, in following behind Jesus on this “path of righteousness,” there is justice for those who suffer at the hands of injustices, justice is served against those who perpetrate such injustices, and the “new normal” promised in the Christ child is fulfilled. So, again, we have this continuing thread of the past two weeks of a “new normal” where justice is

served, the lowly are lifted up, and there is peace among all persons. So great and hope-filling is this promise of peace and justice brought to us by the Christ child that Mary, a female, teenage peasant pregnant out of wedlock, one who has all the reason in the world to be hopeless due to her vulnerability, is moved to sing a song of joy and praise, despite her place of powerlessness in society. The love she feels shown for her and for those like her by God, the hope and peace said love instills in her heart, causes her to sing of that hope, peace, love, and joy.

In the end, this is the message, the calling, given to us in today's readings. God loves us so much that, as any good parent, They are willing to do what is necessary to redirect and steer a wayward people back towards a path of righteousness. So great is God's love for us that They are willing to walk that path ahead of us, showing us the way we are to live our lives by showing love to the lowly and marginalized, teaching as we follow along how we are to treat those who suffer at the hands of the powers that be and how we are to resist those wicked powers in our world. God not only loves us, but in fact uses us as the means of showing that same love to the rest of the world. Just as the Christ child is a sign of God's love for all the world, so are we, the flock of God, further proof of that unconditional love. So, I'll close with this: How are you loving the world as you have first been loved?