



Roots and Wings: A Sermon for Mothers' Day
John 17:6-19

Sunday, May 13th, 2018 ~ 7th Sunday of Easter
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois
Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel, Jr.

Texts:

(vs. 1) "Holy Father, protect them that they be one as we are one. ..."

(vs. 15) "I am not asking you to take them out of the world but I ask you to protect them from the evil one."

It has been said that there are two lasting things that we give our children; one is roots and the other is wings. Good deep roots make a good foundation upon which they build their lives.

Jesus once said that everyone who hears his words and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. When the rain falls, the floods come, and the winds blow beating on that house, it does not fall, because it had been built on rock. But those who hear his words and does not do them are like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And when the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew his house fell, "and great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7:24-27)

Wings give freedom and the courage to fly, to soar on the winds of life.. Once again, Jesus said, "I have come that they might have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:10)

I was blessed with a mother and father who did their best to give me deep roots

and strong wings. While they were not perfect parents, no parent is, they did their best to keep me grounded while giving me the freedom to fail. They set limits without to being controlling. They didn't try to "protect" me from the world. After dinner we would watch the evening news with either Walter Cronkite or Huntley and Brinkley. They never sent me out of the room or told me to close my eyes and not look at some story on the news. They took time to explain things to me that I could not otherwise understand. By today's standards they were probably too lenient but I suspect that they they seemed to sense that I was going to face, in the word of that balladeer from an earlier time, Cat Stevens, that I would be walking into a "wild world where it is hard to get by just upon a smile."

This morning's gospel lesson is Jesus' attempt at giving his disciples a final lesson in "roots and wings". He was not to be with them much longer. The reading is part of what is called Jesus' "high priestly prayer". It occurred on the last night that he was with his disciples. Unlike the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in John's gospel Jesus does not struggle with indecision. There is no prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus wrestled with "the cup"; "if it be possible let this cup pass...but thy will be done". In John's gospel Jesus calmly walked to the Garden of Gethsemane for his arrest.

In this prayer, Jesus is at peace with himself and with God. In John's gospel the struggle for Jesus' soul occurred in chapter 12; "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say" 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason that I came to this hour." (v. 27)

In this prayer Jesus is preparing his disciples for what is to come. And he prayed for two things. First, that his disciples, then and now, "be one". I have often thought that it is neither idle hands nor idle minds that are the devil's playgrounds, but a church that is fully committed to the work of the Kingdom of God. Nothing strikes fear in the heart of the devil than a church hitting on all cylinders. The parable that Jesus told about "the enemy" sowing weeds in the night in a field of grain is a story of disharmony within the body of Christ.

When individuals allow the mantle of Christian leadership to be placed upon their shoulders they vow to promote the "peace", "unity", and "purity" of the church for the church is called to be sign to the world of what God intends for all humanity. The terms *peace*, *unity* and *purity* are often misunderstood.

Peace is not simply the absence of conflict. Peace can only be known when we face our differences openly with the confidence that it is Jesus Christ, and Christ alone, that holds us together. We can do this because we know that Christ alone is the head of the church. Our diversity in temperament, background and culture are not something to be feared but something to be cherished. Everyone has a part to play in the body of Christ. But peace cannot come about when we are afraid, when some rule by intimidation or when everyone privately pretends to agree but in reality feel isolated or unheard. Such peace comes at the expense of integrity and honesty.

Unity is fragile.

Unity doesn't mean "uniformity".

It means that there is a basic respect for one another whereby each person believes that the other is genuinely seeking to be faithful of Jesus Christ to the best of their ability. And it means that we, too, are seeking to be faithful to Jesus Christ.

Peace and unity are always in tension with "purity".

Purity does not come from uniformity or from narrow legalism but from seeking together to be faithful in the knowledge that we are but hewers of wood and drawers of water, stewards of God's Creation and servants in God's Kingdom that knows no end.

And that brings us to the second thing that Jesus prayed for in today's lesson; that God not take His disciples out of the world but protect--watch over them--as they engage in the world.

There is a scene in the Whoopi Goldberg movie "Sister Act" where Ms. Goldberg portrays a murder witness under protective custody in a Roman Catholic motherhouse and disguised as "Sister Mary Clarence" recruits the Monsignor O'Hara to encourage the Reverend Mother to allow the nuns in her charge to go out into the neighborhood. When the nuns hear the news they are excited. "This is why I became a nun," one exclaims. There is so much good that we can do out there," another adds.

“But surely you know, Monsignor,” the Reverend Mother sputtered, “how dangerous the neighborhood is.”

“And you shall meet the danger,” the Monsignor says with smiling confidence, and adds, “as if I could stop you!”

Jesus did not pray for his followers to be “safe”.

He prayed for them to be “faithful”.

He did not call them to “save” themselves, but to give themselves away.”

On the front of today’s bulletin there is a prayer from the Rev. Phillips Brooks.

O, do not pray for easy lives,
Pray to be stronger!
Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers.
Pray for powers equal to your tasks!
Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle.
But you shall be a miracle.
Every day you shall wonder at yourself,
as the richness of life which has come to you by the grace of God.

May that be our prayer, too.

Mothers, thank you for giving us roots and wings.

Amen.