

“Opening of the Gate”

July 18, 2021

Rev. Marvin Krieger

Last Sunday the garden was dedicated and the focus was planting and sharing, as in the feeding of the 5,000. Today, and also next Sunday, we are going to continue on that theme of God’s Creating powers and how we participate in that relationship.

As we turn to our Psalm this morning we find a song which David probably used in processing into the Temple, entering into the space where the Ark was placed. This may or may not have been a permanent structure at this time but may simply have been in a tent which was erected outside the battle grounds.

We see that David recognizes that not only is the earth God’s but also WE are a part of that creation, we are a part of God and we as humans enter into God’s space.

Have you ever woken up in the morning, looked out into the world, and thought to yourself: “I am a part of this creation which God has made!”? Too often we look around and think: “Look at all the things I have!” Sometimes we might add: “I am blessed,” but we still identify it as “mine”. Like children playing too, often God hears: “You can’t have it, it’s mine!” Hearing this from individuals and countries alike, we find it difficult to share that which actually belongs to God, the creator. We often hold fast because we are afraid that we may not get it back or that they may end up with more than we have in our possession. Jesus challenges us as he challenged his disciples to leave those nets behind and follow him and recognize that God will provide. Not everyone followed, as we see in Luke 9, with the man who wants to first bury his father and the second who wanted to return home to say farewell.

So, David asks “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And Who shall stand in his holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts.”

In order to enter into the presence of God’s sphere David calls for us to make a sacrifice at God’s altar and Jesus shares that we must not turn back but to move forward to God’s kingdom.

I believe that this past year we have been able to see many examples of those who have taken that step forward with courage and not turning around: those frontline workers who risked their lives even before there was a vaccine; parents and teachers who continued to make sure that children received the education they needed, and those who continued to feed and care those persons in need and those who were most vulnerable. These, and many others moved forward without complaint and instead of delivering messages of despair and degradation gave hope and encouragement to move on, these are the ones with clean hands and pure hearts who may move into God’s sphere and stand along side the ark of the covenant of God. The entrance is not one of ritual but instead of moral cleanliness and purity, not for our own sake, but for our neighbors. Jesus’ direction is for us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

In the words of the Psalm: Such is the company of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. When we lay the offering of ourselves at the altar of God it is then that we receive His blessing, the blessing of our salvation. It is with this courage that Jesus teaches us to move forward so that others may stand along side us in his presence. It is then that we may invite God into the human sphere, our sphere: "Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors! That the King of glory may come in."

We lift our heads as mere mortals in order to recognize that God is God but we must recognize him and allow him to enter, opening the gates of our hearts which are often closed to seeing where he is present in our lives, lifting the door that keeps others out because of the barriers we have constructed. Too often we classify people and lump them into specific categories rather than look at individuals. Jesus attempted to break down those barriers, often healing those who were outcasts and speaking to those who were not within his standing; unfortunately, and too often, we behave more like the Pharisees and the Priests who continued to criticize.

"Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle." It is the Lord who can help us in the battle to overcome our mistrusts, our fears, and our prejudices. We all have prejudices but we must recognize them so that we can overcome them and then move forward. As protestants we often stay clear of the word "confession", but confession in faith is a recognition of where we fall short in the loving relation with all of God's creation; to confess the sovereignty of our Lord means that I am not the ruler of my own life, not my will but your will be done. According to the New Testament, the strength and might of this king Jesus are unlike those of any earthly king. This King, who from eternity had the power, authority, even sovereignty—gave it up. Rather than kill, he chose to be killed. "You who were once estranged and hostile in mind...he has now reconciled in the body of his flesh through death" (Colossians 1:21).

David ends his psalm, asking as he does previously:

"Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

Jesus Christ—who did not count sovereignty or equality with God a thing to be exploited, but emptied himself into a manger, being born in human likeness, in human form. We, who are his followers, must seek to reject our differences so that God may truly enter into our sphere and walk with us on our journey through this life.

Thank you God for allowing me to Open my Gate and for making me a part of Your creation.