

Pentecost 15 (proper 18) St. Luke's, EG (8&10)

As we trust in YOU with all our hearts, you never forsake us...
in the name of the Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today's incredibly moving Psalm and Collect make it a little easier to swallow the Gospel with its demanding tone about the cost of discipleship.

“Are you listening, really listening?” asks the paraphrase by Eugene Peterson in **The Message**, which we just heard Ricky proclaim.

As I pondered this challenge for myself, I was grateful to have not only the Psalm and the Collect to set a context, but also the Morning Resolve from *Forward Day by Day*. I wonder how many actually use that incredibly relevant charge to anyone trying to live out discipleship just one day at a time.

I will try this day to live a simple, sincere, and serene life, repelling promptly every thought of discontent, anxiety, discouragement, impurity, and self-seeking; cultivating cheerfulness, magnanimity, charity, and the habit of holy silence; exercising economy in expenditure, generosity in giving, carefulness in conversation, diligence in appointed service, fidelity to every trust, and a childlike faith in God.

In particular I will try to be faithful in those habits of prayer, work, study, physical exercise, eating, and sleep which I believe the Holy Spirit has shown me to be right.

And as I cannot in my own strength do this, nor even with a hope of success attempt it, I look to thee, O Lord God my Father, in Jesus my Savior, and ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Such a resolve blows me away. I don't know how any of us can repeat that morning by morning and not have a sense of being held in God's hand, despite the demands of discipleship which daily come to us and may seem as intimidating as the Gospel story we just heard.

We look to the Lord not for solace only, but for strength; not for pardon only, but for renewal as the Prayer of Consecration (form C) phrases it so beautifully. (We just may use that very form today !)

Becoming a disciple of Jesus requires careful discernment. So after the cautionary warning in the Gospel, there are two parables unique to Luke, one about building a tower, and one about the king's armies, that tell us to plan wisely, to choose our options realizing the consequences.

So with becoming a disciple, are we up to it? Is this what we really want even after we've considered the cost and the consequences? Are we listening, really listening?

From my teenage years I remember this question printed on a church sign I've never forgotten:

***If you were arrested for being a Christian
would there be enough evidence to convict you?***

Have we been faithful to our vows, we ask ourselves daily? And when we haven't, have we confessed and tried again? Are we really able to give up our possessions, at least be ready to, and maybe even our lives?

With these cautionary challenges, it's a wonder any of show up at all, don't you think?

So, what's the draw? Why do we give our lives to Christ and suffer the consequences? Why does that Morning Resolve mean so much?

Well, though the cost of discipleship may be great, so are the promises. What a way to live out our lives, I say, with so much meaning and purpose and promise for now and later.

Those promises and that vision of eternal life we are always praying and singing about shape us and how we live, move, and have our being in such ways that we seem to

- keep on coming;
- we keep on wanting our children brought up this way;
- we keep coming back to be married, and to be buried;
- and to be forgiven when we know we've messed up meanwhile!

I look at that Table and marvel almost every Sunday of what happens here: the miracle of death and resurrection recalled every time we celebrate, and I look out at the congregation continuing to come forward responding to the invitation:

***The gifts of God for the people of God: Eat and live! or
Receive who you are, become what you eat!***

What a vision!

Enriched by the lessons, the psalms, the hymns we sing, and the prayers we pray, we look to be shaped into the people we believe God wills us to be.

Paul, Philemon and Onesimus provide a vision of mutual love from early church days that continue to inspire us. Paul asks Philemon to take back Onesimus, the slave into his household without repercussions.

Onesimus (whose name means “the useful one”) has become a Christian and Paul and he have forged a strong friendship through their time together. ***Let mutual love continue*** is the message and we see it in our own lives and relationships, just as we see it in Scripture, not one without the other truly to make it come alive.

Jeremiah illustrates how we belong to the Lord and are shaped by the presence of God in our lives: **that potter is molding us** despite the pain of cracks and fissures, the sins of our lives, **into the vessels worthy of our Lord** and his high calling for us as a nation and as a people.

So come back to walking in that way one day at a time:

- make a morning resolve, (perhaps along the lines of FDBD);
- remember it is not so much how successful we are, as how faithful we can be to that tough call of discipleship;
- it’s not how correct we are, as how Christ-connected we remain!

As earnest, hopeful and grateful disciples, may we truly hear the promise of today’s Collect that ***as we trust in you with all our hearts, Lord, you will never forsake us,***

even now, as we stand to say we believe...

