

26 Pentecost, Proper 28, 2019  
November 17, 2019  
The Church of the Redeemer, Greenville, SC  
The Rev. Catherine L. Tatem

Malachi 4:1-2a    Psalm 98    2 Thessalonians 3:6-13    Luke 21:5-19

How was your week? “Busy” comes to mind, or ... usual. Ordinary. How about today – is it ordinary, too? Just another Sunday ...

But today is not “just another Sunday.” While we do not face death for proclaiming Jesus Christ as our Savior, there is a cost to being a Christian. Each person here today gave up something to be here; what was it for you? We have made a choice to worship together, to follow Jesus; and for some reason, our soul or our spouse or our parent – and the Holy Spirit – got us to church this morning, to sit in our usual pews among others who are following Jesus. In a culture that demands our attention in almost anything except religion, I would say that, in being at Redeemer this morning your expression of Christianity is courageous, adventurous, and faithful.

You are *courageous* because a familiar narrative – and we have the statistics to back it up – insists that the church is dying. But *we* know that when two or three are gathered, Christ is among us. Christ is present. We are not a business, a commission, and maybe, not even an organization. We are followers of “the way,” the way of the risen Christ. We are new people in Christ: new in resurrection life, new in receiving the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. New people in Christ: be of good courage.

You are *adventurous* because when the trinity of God is present: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, something always happens. The sick are healed. Those who betray are forgiven. Church buildings are destroyed and *the church* is still standing. Strangers in those other pews become our neighbors just by their presence. Who knows what could, or will, happen next? Adventurous people of God: expect the presence of the Holy Spirit; prepare to be amazed.

You are *faithful* in showing up, in reciting the prayers, in participating in worship; some of our liturgical practices extend back to the very first Christians. A non-faithful world cannot duplicate the depth of these expressions of faith. You participate in many ways: in saying “I’m sorry to God,” in offering one another the horrible, beautiful, and holy peace of Christ; in reaching, reaching for the body and

blood of Christ. Faithful ones: do not go after false prophets. The risen Christ is your testimony.

I have observed these characteristics of this body of Christ in the first few weeks of being your priest and rector. As we carry out our lives as courageous, adventurous and faithful Christians, growing into mature disciples of Christ, it is appropriate for us to be both knowledgeable and intentional about why and how we gather. Ordinary weeks – and extraordinary ones – call for a time of prayer as the body of Christ, the church, to praise and thank God. Thus, our principal act of worship each Sunday is an act of thanksgiving, Eufaristo, Eucharist. We as a congregation “make Eucharist;” we ask God to pour God’s Holy Spirit into the offerings of our life, with bread and wine representing our sustenance; and labor, with money representing the means of exchange for that labor. These offerings – listen to the words in the prayer of consecration – are an offering of praise and thanksgiving to God. We then ask God to make our offerings and ourselves holy, sanctified – Holy Eucharist, Holy Thanksgiving, holy people of God.

The very first and basic act of making holy Eucharist is *gathering*. The celebration of the Eucharist does not begin after the peace and the offering, but in gathering, in the moment we open the outside doors and become this body of Christ. Enter, then, in a frame of mind of intentional preparation for worship. Center your actions on spending time as the holy people of God. Consider what it is that you and this body need. We might need respite, or to repent or be challenged to turn ordinary into action. Give one another the gift of preparation and of prayer. This means, in part, the use of softer voices in the narthex/foyer. We have plenty of time and many places to talk in an extended fashion with one another. I, too, need to remember that the time just before the service begins is not an appropriate time to follow up on “to do/to ask/to remind” details. *God* is yearning for our attention.

The Church of the Redeemer has a wonderful gift of exuberance and joy in greeting one another. I am asking only that we express this gift of Godly joy in a quiet manner as we gather and during the context of worship.

Courageous, adventure and faithful people of God: God delights in our gathering. We are not complete without your gifts to this community. God’s joy will not be complete until we are all gathered in God’s kingdom on earth and in heaven. With gathering being part of thanksgiving and of becoming God’s kingdom, now how is your week? The ordinary has become holy, God is thankful.  
Amen.