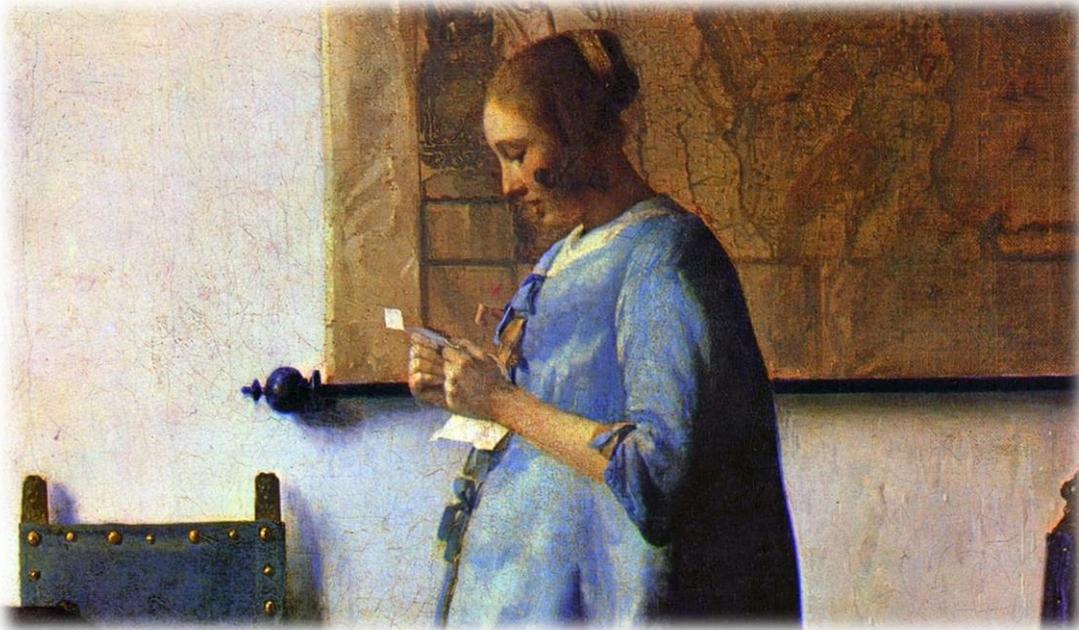




Sixth Sunday in Easter Sunday, May 6th, 2018

Easter Faith: From Ordinary Friendship to Extraordinary Friendship



Johannes Vermeer – “Woman Reading a Letter” (1663 Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

Johannes Vermeer was a little-known artist in 17th century Holland: just another ‘genre painter’. He worked all his life in the town of Delft and died destitute. The times in which he painted were not his times. Paintings typically represented the rising merchant/business class - usually men - who bank-rolled portraits mirroring their success. Vermeer on the other hand, had the gift of seeing the extraordinary in the mundane – servant milkmaids in the kitchen pouring milk, women sitting sowing at the doors of their simple homes – and above, the beautiful depiction of a young woman, dressed in blue, simply reading a letter. Her face shows that she is absorbed. She clutches the letter closely, reading and re-reading it. Is it from her husband or child or a friend, who is travelling in another part of the world, as the map behind suggests? What is clear is that this *ordinary moment is an extraordinary moment*. Her friendship with the one who has sent the letter is not just an ordinary thing, but rather something extraordinary. It brims with significance, it overflows with meaning.

Today, as we celebrate the last Sunday of the Easter Season, we focus our attention upon the theme of friendship. For John’s Gospel, friendship is a fundamental trait of the Christian life. It is no ordinary matter, but something that the Gospel transforms from an ordinary dimension of life to an extraordinary one. *Jesus makes the ordinary, extraordinary.*

GATHERING

Announcements

Greeting

Christ is risen!

Sing a new song!

Sing praise to our still-laughing Easter God;
who has rolled away the limitations of yesterday.

Immerse your anxiety and despair in the fountain of resurrection;
for God takes ordinary things;
and makes them extraordinary.

We turn our eyes to the Paschal Candle

We light the candle knowing that our faith in Jesus
and what he represents
is sometimes strong,
sometimes elusive,

Easter is the season when we thoughtfully celebrate
Christ breaking the bounds of death

Hymn: Creation sings a new song to the Lord (TiS 166, Cosmic Praise, James Phillip McAuley)

The Peace

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Giving Thanks for the Easter Community of Friendship: God makes the Ordinary become Extraordinary

Last week we heard the first part of John 15, that spoke of the Christian community as one that *dwells* or *remains* with Christ, just as Christ *dwells* with God – a relationship of intimacy and mutuality. We also heard that the outward measure of this dwelling was that we “produce fruit”. Today, we hear the second part of the chapter, where it is explained just what this fruit actually is: love. In our prayers this morning, we focus upon this idea, love of God for us and the love that God generates between us,

furnishing us with our extraordinary identity. This morning, I want to express this idea of the Christian community as *the place of love and identity* through the writing of the Afro-American theologian James Cone, who died this past April 28th, 2018.

A Clip: “Mississippi Burning - The Church – *the Place of Extraordinary Friendship*

On Sunday morning after spending six days struggling to create meaning from life,
the people of Bearden, Tennessee, would go to church,
because they knew Jesus was going to be there.
Sister Ora Wallace would begin the familiar hymn...
Immediately the entire congregation would join her
because they felt the presence of Jesus.

When the pastor would say,
“I know the Lord is in this place! Can I get a witness?”
The people responded with shouts of praise saying, “Amen” and
“Halleluiah”.
Through song, prayer and sermon the community affirmed Jesus’
presence and their willingness to make it through their troubled
situation.

Some would smile and others would cry.
Someone, depending upon the Spirit’s effect on her,
would clap her hands and tap her feet.

All of these expressions were but black people bearing witness
to Jesus’ presence among them.

He was the divine power in their lives...

How could black people know they were human beings
When they were treated like cattle?
How could they know that they were somebody,
when everything in their environment said they were nobody?
How could they know that they had value
that could not be defined in dollars and cents,
when the symbol of the auction block was an ever-present reality?

Only because they knew that Christ was present with them

and that his presence generated the love and friendship they experienced in their Christian community.

This gave the lie to the reality outside

This gave the lie to the reality outside

O God

Thank you for our time in community,

for deep friendships,

for those conversations that extend into the night,

for the sharing of who we are:

vulnerability

lubricated by laughter...and

sometimes tears.

For the freedom to serve others and to affirm ourselves

Make us extraordinary people!

Amen

The children leave for Sunday Morning Group (SMG)

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

Some Insights into Friendship

A tree is known by its fruit; a man by his deeds. A good deed is never lost; he who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love. **Saint Basil, Bishop of Caesarea (330-379AD)**

Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend. **Martin Luther King (1929-1968), Jr. Clergyman and Activist**

Don't walk behind me; I may not lead. Don't walk in front of me; I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend. **Albert Camus (1913-1960), French Author**

Christ did not lay down his life for us as enemies so that we should remain enemies, but so that he could make us friends.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Lectures on the Gospel of John

The only way to have a friend is to be one.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), American essayist and Philosopher

One loyal friend is worth ten thousand relatives.

Euripides, Athenian Playwright

We are aware that globalization doesn't mean global friendship but global competition and, therefore, conflict. That doesn't mean we will all destroy each other, but it is no happy global village, either.

René Girard (1923-2015), French Catholic Anthropologist , Stanford University

Friendship marks a life even more deeply than love. Love risks degenerating into obsession, friendship is never anything but sharing.

Elie Wiesel (1928-2016), Professor of Humanities and Author, Boston University

Acts 10:44-48 (Good News Translation)

Shirley Luttrell

These few verses play a key role in Luke's depiction of the story of the early church, as it broke out beyond the cultural limits of Judaism and embraced those who were non-Jews/ Gentiles. He describes their experience as matching what happened with the Jewish hearers on the Day of Pentecost. Non-Jews are depicted as receiving the Spirit in the same way as Jews: this is their Pentecost. There can be no discrimination.

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who were listening to his message. ⁴⁵ The Jewish believers who had come from Joppa with Peter were amazed that God had poured out his gift of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in strange tongues and praising God's greatness. Peter spoke up: ⁴⁷ "These people have received the Holy Spirit, just as we also did. Can anyone, then, stop them from being baptized with water?" ⁴⁸ So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay with them for a few days.

John 15:9-17 (Good News Translation)

Philip Southwell

Closely connected to last week's reading, this passage moves away from the image of the vine to speak directly of love. Love characterises the Father's relation with the Son and the Son's relation with the disciples. 'God is love' appears in 1 John 4:8, but is already the foundational idea here.

⁹ I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

¹¹ "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you. ¹³ The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them. ¹⁴ And you are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because servants do not know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures. And so, the Father will give you whatever you ask of him in my name. ¹⁷ This, then, is what I command you: love one another.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

Some thoughts...the extraordinary breadth and depth of Christian friendship

Offering

Doxology

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise him, all creatures here below,
praise him above, ye heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

Prayer of Dedication

Hymn: And can it be (TiS 209, Sagina, Charles Wesley)

Easter Season Eucharist

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you
And also with you

Let us lift up our hearts.

..... ***We lift them to the Lord.***

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

.....***It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

It is indeed right to give you our thanks and praise, O God,
for your love is forever
and you have raised the crucified Christ from the dead.

You created all things and placed Christ as the cornerstone.
You made your grace known to Israel in the wilderness,
and through your prophets you pledged
your everlasting love and constant faithfulness.

You anointed your child, Jesus,
with the Holy Spirit and power,
and he went about doing good
and healing all who were oppressed by evil.
He was put to death, hung on a tree,
but you raised him on the third day,
and allowed him to appear, first to Mary Magdalene
and then to your other chosen witnesses.
So now we praise you within the gates of justice
and raise our glad songs of victory
for you have become our saviour
and hidden our lives in Christ in glory.
Therefore we join with all the company of heaven in their song

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth
are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.***

***Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest***

***Through him, in him and because of him,
We affirm the Church's faith***

***Christ has died.
Christ has risen.
Christ will come again.***

Institution

Lord's Prayer

Let us say the Lord's Prayer

***Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.***

***Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.***

하늘에 계신 우리 아버지여
 이름이 거룩히 여김을 받으시오며
 나라이 임하옵시며
 뜻이 하늘에서 이룬 것 같이
 땅에서도 이루어지이다.
 오늘날 우리에게 일용할 양식을 주옵시고
 우리가 우리에게
 죄 지은 자를 사하여 준 것 같이
 우리 죄를 사하여 주옵시고
 우리를 시험에 들게 하지 마옵시고
 다만 악에서 구하옵소서
 대개 나라와 권세와 영광이
 아버지께 영원히 있사옵나이다. 아멘

Breaking of the Bread

Christ is the bread of joy
Who shares food with sinners.

Christ is the cup of life,
Who revives the faint-hearted

Let us receive what we are;
Let us become what we receive.

Agnus Dei

Jesus, Wisdom of God,
have mercy on us

Jesus, Word made flesh,
have mercy on us

Jesus, Liberator of creation
grant us peace.

Communion

Distribution

We come forward as a family to partake of the elements together at the Communion Table. The cup on the right-hand side as you face the table is unfermented grape juice and the cup on the left-hand side is alcoholic wine.

Prayer after Communion

God of heaven and earth,
 you make us one in Christ.
 Inspire us with new vision
 becoming a community marked by extraordinary friendship.
 Give us strength to walk together
 In Christ's name

Amen

Prayers of the People

Colin Bradford

The one who prays after a series of petitions says, "Raise us Lord" and the people respond, "Make us a risen people".

Closing Hymn: Love Divine (TiS 217, Hyfrydol, Charles Wesley)

Blessing and Sending Out

Christ is risen!
 We look to the signs of a new world
 We live out the signs of this new world.

Our service has ended
 Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

Amen

Sung Blessing: Father bless us as we go (TiS 781, Kookaburra, Robin Mann)

Father bless us as we go
Jesus walk beside us
Holy Spirit guide us (twice)

Musical Postlude

Organist:

Jim Abraham

