

The Rev. Michael C. Fedewa

Wisdom 1:13-15, 2:23-24

Psalm 30

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

Mark 5 21-43

Proper 8 B

June 29, 2015

That dear friends was the week that was.

Actually, it was a bit more than a week—11 days to be specific. It has been a breath taking to see the changes in our country that have occurred in the past 11 days.

The news out of Charleston on June 17 and 18 was so devastating. The image of 9 people murdered because of their race by a man they had been praying with for nearly an hour horrified us that day. In the days that followed we were deeply offended by the alleged killers hatred and racism. We were moved deeply by the words of forgiveness spoken by those who loved the Mother Emanuel Martyrs. We were stunned by images and the news of officials calling on their states to take down the flags and symbols of the confederacy.

Almost lost in the news out of Charleston was the release of the Papal Encyclical Laudate Si by Pope Frances. In this encyclical, released on June 18, Frances speaks to the hearts of all people. He urgently makes his appeal for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. He reminds us that everyone's talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God's creation. All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.

This week long awaited rulings from the Supreme Court regarding discrimination in housing, the affordable care act, and the rights of gays and lesbians to marry legally in our country were announced. These rulings will shape our country in ways that we can only now imagine.

The headlines from the General Convention of the Episcopal Church as the week began were not so dramatic. As I prepare for my sermon, no decision has been made about possible changes in our understanding of marriage, but I am excited by the news that Bishop Michael Curry has been elected our next presiding Bishop. What a powerful statement!!!An African American will be the voice of the Episcopal Church for the coming years.

And, on a more personal side, this past Monday, Portland Michigan, the town I grew up in, the town where my mother still lives, was struck by a tornado. While we give thanks that no one was killed or seriously injured, I am so stunned by the extent of the damage to the town I call home. The damage to so many home and businesses, and especially to three churches that have been there for over 100 hundred years is heartbreaking.

This has been an incredible 11 days. Our country, and indeed our Church will never be the same.

What I ask of you now, is that we put all these incredible events aside for just a few minutes to seek what our scriptures have to say to us. Especially in light of these incredible events.

Wisdom tell us boldly simply that God did not make death. Rather, death has entered the world through the envy of the devil. This is an important truth to hold firmly as we face the terror of hatred, violence and murder. God is not the author of death. The enemy, the devil is responsible.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul is writing about a collection that he taking for the very poor and struggling Church in Jerusalem. This collection is a priority for Paul, not only as he writes to the Corinthians, but in much of his missionary preaching. He sees this offering as a way to follow Jesus, and also as a way to unite the Jewish and Gentile Christians. There were deep cultural and theological disputes between the Christians of Jerusalem and the Gentile Church established by Paul. It is Paul's hope that the Church can see that its unity in the imitation of Jesus is deeper than these differences.

In the Gospel, Mark records two remarkable stories of healing. This is another example of Mark wrapping one story, (the healing of the daughter of Jairus), around the healing of the unnamed woman with a flow of blood. Mark tells the story in a way that shows the unity of these stories. These two healings that are very much related. Both healings are of women. One who is twelve years old, and one who has been bleeding for twelve years. One is wealthy, the daughter of Jairus, a leader of the synagogue. One is poor, she has run out of money and has no one to advocate for her. Jairus comes before Jesus and bows before him as he make his request. The woman sneaks up behind Jesus and seeks to touch the hem of his garment. The young girl is the daughter of Jairus. Jesus calls the unnamed woman with the flow of blood, daughter. Clearly Mark wants us to connect these stories. Marks wants us to see that this is not only a story of the healing of two women. This is a story of the healing of Israel. It occurs on the Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee. The 12 represents the 12 tribes of Israel. The point of these stories is not only that Jesus healed two women in Jerusalem, but in so doing he is symbolizing the healing of Israel. Jesus stops on his way to the house of Jairus to heal an unnamed impure, poor woman. Jesus stops on the way to the home of an important man to heal a woman who is not important.

In this story, Mark is revealing that before the rich, and important daughter of Jairus can be healed, the poor, unnamed daughter of Jesus must be cared for. The people of Israel, the twelve tribes will only be whole, when the poor unimportant ones are cared for.

Dear friends, I believe that the lessons of our readings speak to the headlines of the past 11 days. The death of the martyrs in Charleston was the work of evil. Human suffering of all kinds, is rooted not in the will of God but in the envy of the evil one. As followers of Jesus, we need to claim and proclaim this message. God did not make death. God created all for incorruption and in the image of his won eternity.

Corinthians calls us to deep unity in Christ with those with whom we disagree. We may not all agree with all the pope said about climate change. We may not all agree with the rulings of the

Supreme Court this week. Paul reminds us however that even with differences, we are one in Christ. In Christ, we are all in mission together, Jew, Gentile, conservative, liberal, black, white, woman, man, gay, straight, young and old. This unity in Christ is deeper and stronger than any of our differences.

Mark's Gospel reminds us, that healing in our community and in our world will only come when all are cared for. Those who are among the privileged will only find healing and wholeness when those who are less privileged are cared for. Human kind will only find wholeness when all creation is cared for. The wealthy will only find wholeness when the poor are cared for. Privileged nations, privileged races, privileged classes will only find wholeness, when the less privileged are cared for.

Yes dear friends. We have seen tremendous events in our nation and in our Church these past 11 days. Some of these events fill us with pain. Some give us hope. Some make us cry, some make us rejoice. Some show how far we have to go. Some show how far we have come.

Our hope and prayer is that all of these events may call us to deeper unity in Christ. May our unity in Christ call us to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. By his grace, may the good news of Jesus, shape the news of the weeks and months and years to come.