

Sunday, August 8, 2010 – The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost Luke 12:32-40

Spirituality

God of the Universe, we close our eyes to your presence and wait for your coming. God does not meet our expectations. God does not exist to fulfill our wants and desires. God challenges us to live beyond our limited vision. God is continuously dragging us kicking and screaming to higher levels of humanity. Jews at the time of Jesus knew exactly what the Messiah was coming to accomplish. Jesus met none of their expectations. That meant either Jesus was not the Messiah, or in the tradition of the Book of Daniel, he would return at a later time to fulfill all of their fondest hopes and dreams. This is the context of this morning's Gospel Lesson. One segment of the early church sold their possessions and waited for Jesus return. The Second Coming of Jesus continues to be a reoccurring theme in some areas of the church even today. We do not look to Jesus to be the answer to our expectations of God. We look to Jesus to find what God expects of us. We are not the ones calling the shots. In the language of today's Gospel, we are not the servants telling the master what to do.

We are not here on earth to sit and wait for something better to come along. God is not out there or up there waiting for some future time to return and make everything right. God will not come at some time in the future and suddenly everything will be transformed to meet all of our hopes and desires. It has never been that way in the past and I do not expect it to be any different in the future. God is with us here and now. Creation is continuing to unfold and we have been called by God to participate in the process. It is our work to bring into being a world of compassion and justice. Jesus came, not to meet our Messianic expectations, but to show us and in turn challenge us to live our lives according to God's will. Jesus is a window into God's presence. God is here for each one of us at this time and place. Each one of us has a unique relationship with God. We are called to open our lives to God's presence and be about the task to which we have been called. We speak of this in terms of our spirituality.

We live in one of the most unchurched areas of the United States. We have been referred to as the "none zone", the area where people mark none in reference to their church affiliation. While we are one of the most unchurched, we are an area with a strong seeking of the spiritual. Spirituality is a high priority in people's lives. This says two things to me. The first is that spirituality is a part of the way we are hard wired as human beings and the second is that a lot of people's switches are not being turned on in church.

I feel that part of the problem is that much of our model of spirituality comes from the Greek thought of Plato and not the Hebrew tradition of Jesus. Plato believed that people are divided into two parts, the physical and the spiritual. The two are not interrelated. The spiritual has to do with God, church, worship, prayer, heaven and everything else that is not part of the physical. The physical is flawed and is not a place

of God or the spiritual. We are pilgrims here on earth, strangers on a journey to the Promised Land. When we open ourselves to the words of Hebrew tradition of Jesus we find that God is the creator of both the physical and the spiritual. God is present and active throughout the world. This is God's kingdom. Each person is a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual whole.

Deep in each of us there resides a spirit, a soul. It is as much a part of who we are as our fingers, heart or mind. It is soul that enables us to sense beyond what we can feel, to know beyond what our eyes can see and to live beyond what our minds can grasp. It is soul that enables us to give of ourselves completely in the love, care and support of another. It is the spirit of a person, soul touched by the presence of God that creates depth of character, breath of compassion and height of honor.

Yet we tend to live on the surface of life, not in the depth. The quip, "What you see is what you get," might be an apt description of contemporary reality. "If it cannot be seen, it does not exist," can be said of the soul. There is more to a person than surface appearances. If that were not true we would be shallow indeed. There must be something that we stand for, a hope, a dream or a purpose, something deep within each one of us, at the very center of our being that compels us to reach out, and in spite of the struggle, to grow.

Unfortunately, the souls of modern humans are even more under-developed than their muscles and minds. Spiritual discipline has become a forgotten concept. One does not get into healthy physical condition by sitting back and watching. Getting into shape is not an easy task. It is difficult, time consuming and often painful with the desired results slow in coming. Results do come, results that give a wide range of benefits.

Development of the soul is no different. If we are going to develop the wholeness of being that enables us to love beyond ourselves, to live beyond problems and pain, to stand up for what we believe to be right, we must be ready to enter into a spiritual awareness. This begins with the acceptance that we are spiritual beings, here and now. Another word for spirituality is connectedness. We are not isolated beings. We have been created by God and God is present and active in our lives whether we recognize it or not. Once we open our lives to God's presence we begin to recognize that we are a part of something that lives in the fullness of time and space. It is spirituality that connects to the rest of creation, the earth, its people and creatures and the vast limits of space. It is spirit that draws us beyond ourselves.

Our spirituality is a part of every aspect of our lives. It informs everything that we are and do. It cannot be packaged up and put away to be brought out at a convenient time and place. The very basis of our spirituality is our relationship with God. We are God's and God is not going to let us go. There is little wonder that spirituality is such a vital human need.

God of the Universe, open our eyes to your presence. Then we can get back to your work. Amen.

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