

Third Sunday of Pentecost, Year A, June 21, 2020 UPMP

PRELUDE: "You Are My All in All"

WELCOME / CALL TO WORSHIP

Grace and Peace to you from United Protestant Church in Morgan Park, Duluth, MN where Father's Day brings with it a "Low Pressure" system (if I'm reading it right) that will keep us fairly cool, with a slight chance of rain. Of course, I may be biased as a father myself, but I say that because there's no better way to consider this day for the fathers in your life. "Low pressure systems." No fuss. No worry. Take it easy.

We bring that spirit into worship this morning. Or for those of you that arrive at this moment with busy minds, it's time to take a breath and center yourself. If your mind is already full you won't be able to welcome the presence of the holy spirit. You won't be stirred by God's nudges. You won't be able to hear Jesus's call.

So come in... still your mind, open your heart, and be ready to receive Christ's light.

Let us sing that now...

"Christ Be our Light" (paper copy)

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:24-39

"A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

"So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

"Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

HYMN AFTER SERMON: Guide Me O' Thou Great Jehovah (#448)

SERMON

"So do not be afraid..." Jesus says.

He says (to offer a broad summary) "Change is happening."

He says: *"Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known."* —He says: *"I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."*

And he says: *"Do not be afraid."*

Hey folks—this is a newsflash: We tend to not like change. We tend...to be afraid of change. And just in case (as I am always cautious of in a sermon) I'm painting with too broad of a brush and trying to summarize without honoring the uniqueness of each individual, I'll make it personal.

I get anxious around change. I'm a pretty busy-headed guy so when I'm not chasing my own tail, I'm prone to tucking into my own little world and centering on my own comforts and avoiding things that are new or different from me. Likewise, since I'm often on the preaching and teaching side of things, it's easy for me to skip the work, sit back, and just share what I studied previously and what I already know. I don't think I'm alone here.

But here's the thing: sitting back and tucking into our own little worlds, or just repeating what we already know, is not what Jesus calls us to.

Jesus doesn't ask us if we're *comfortable* with change. There's no *doing okay*? It's more of a *buckle your seatbelts, it's a wild ride ahead*.

But with that, he says: *"Do not be afraid"*—How often does Jesus say in scripture "do not be afraid." "Have no fear" "Peace be with you."

So...if you don't like all the change that you're seeing right now in this world from the news anchors and the headlines, let Jesus tell you the news.

It's easy. Now we've talked here plenty of times about how God is with us every single moment and how God wants so deeply to stir in our hearts and guide our daily actions. It's not hard, friends, to be tuned into the God channel...

...and I gotta tell you, of all the newscasters, Jesus is the most awesome.

Does the news change? No. The world happens as it happens. But the lens through which you view it sure can. Friends, it's the same content. Change is happening. But let Jesus deliver the news. Because before and after every new thing that is happening around us, or before and after every new thing that is happening inside of each of us, Jesus says "do not be afraid."

Take each headline that refers to change, and add those words before and after—I tried a few with the Duluth News Tribune this morning:

"Do not be afraid—Demonstrators March on Juneteenth—Do not be afraid"

"Do not be afraid—Nearly 100 gather in Duluth on World Refugee Day—Do not be afraid."

"Do not be afraid—Partisan divide tanks Minnesota special session, leaving top priorities undone" —Do not be afraid."

What happens when we do this? We start to view our world through the lens of Jesus. We start to listen deeper. We start to imagine what Jesus might witness, different than our snap judgments and opinions. We start to learn.

I shared in the Friday commentary that I saw a sign at a protest that read: "Sorry I'm late. I had a lot to learn."

And I shared that I'm proud to say that I'm learning a lot these days... about racism and white privilege and airborne transmission of disease and listening before judging and honoring different perspectives. I'm also learning a lot as I make an effort to be a kinder person, more open and honest in my communication, making better choices for myself and considering their impact upon others, having more substantial relationships beyond the simple niceties we so often limit ourselves to sharing.

--And I say "I'm proud" because it's not always the easiest thing to do. But it is what Jesus calls us to do. He provides the resource, the Christian lens to help us interpret, engage, and understand.

Listen to the stories. Listen to the different perspectives. Seek, through the Christian lens--the lens of Jesus--to understand and appreciate the new and different things that are

happening (around you and inside you) and where you, or I, as a Christian disciple step forward in God's light.

God has a way of teaching us all uniquely. Because we are all unique. Put it this way: how are you spending Father's Day weekend? We are all spending it differently. I took my kids camping Friday night. I stayed up late in the tent with my seven-year-old daughter and made up silly rhyming stories about "Starlighty and her mighty brightly nighty lighty" and she giggled up a storm while my teenage son had his own tent and grumbled "shaddup I'm trying to go to sleep!" We swam in fresh lakes and caught little panfish and my daughter caught a turtle--which freaked me out to take off the hook, and we ate a lot of unhealthy food. Is that you're idea of a happy Father's Day? No. We're each unique.

And Put it this way: we learn to make a particular meal by following a recipe, but we learn to be good cooks by the adjustments we make commensurate to our own needs and wants. The recipe is adjusted for our own tastes. Same goes for faith. God gives you the wisdom and strength to make the adjustments commensurate to your own life. Common recipe, but unique adjustments.

So yes, friends, change is happening all around us. Likewise change is happening within us, uniquely. Remember those last words: "Do not be afraid."

Peace be with you, Friends.

HYMN AFTER SERMON: "Be Not Dismayed What'ere Betide" (#421)

JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

LORDS PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: "Because the Lord is my Shepherd" (#447)

BENEDICTION *antiseptic wipes, mask*

POSTLUDE: "More Love, More Power"