



ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SERMON

November 3, 2013

Recently I received a phone call from someone who wanted to meet with me because they had questions and wanted to talk. We met early one evening and they started in with questions about who God was and how did one figure out what to believe and what about the confusion and differences in churches and so on. Finally after nearly an hour of back and forth questions and talk, the person paused and reflected that perhaps it was time to leave the world of the internet and the troubling news and stories they kept reading there are hearing on the radio, and maybe the fear mongering and the preaching about killing folks that were declared enemies and bringing violence and destruction might not be the answer. Maybe it was time for trust and faith in something different. I agreed with them.

Sometimes I feel like I live in parallel worlds. There is the world of violence, strife, contention. The world where justice seems allusive and harsh judgment holds sway. New reports of the present and the future are depressing. The reality of wickedness and harm is too prevalent and any answer seems overwhelmingly impossible to have come true. It's the world like the prophet Habakkuk described. It's the world the person I visited with had been paying attention to and immersing themselves in.

And I don't deny that world – and yet here's the parallel world - here I stand, here I stand and I see beauty, I see hope, I see possibilities. I see places where you and I can make differences for good. It is the world where the righteous live by faith. And for me – it is a very real world. A world where I put my energies, where I will commit my life.

When Habakkuk complained to God about the world's problems he was given answer from God that told him to write the vision of God on tablets, write it plainly on tablets and run with it so that others might see. What do you suppose that vision was? What did Habakkuk write on the tablets?

What would be on your tablet? What could you take around with you to show to people like the person I met with a few weeks ago? What is your vision of a world where God, the Lord, is your strength and answer? That vision, that answer is what will make your life worth living as a saint here on earth.

For today we celebrate All Saints day, the day once a year when we bring to mind those whom we have loved and those who have taught and influenced and witnessed to us. And it is the day

once a year when we are reminded that because of our baptism and because of our creator in whose image we have been made – we also are saints. And we have a witness to make, and we have teaching and influences to share. And we have a vision of the kingdom of God. We see how the world is around us, but we know that isn't all there is. Because of our faith we know that another world is possible. As saints we give our hearts and minds and work to a vision that the world doesn't have to be the way some people think it is. I'd say that at least part of our vision is that death is never the last word, and all people have value and worth, and all people should be well fed and no one should ever be abused and each of us has something to contribute to the rest of us.

When we were created and when we were baptized the vision of God was planted in our hearts. And that vision may come into life a bit differently in each one of us, and it may grow at different speeds, and it may not be fully visible all the time, but it's there.

And every day each one of us is called to holy living, to be saints, to share our vision. Saints are those who love God. We are the prophets, we are the witnesses, we are the ones who proclaim the presence of God in communities where there can be peace and justice and we work to make it reality. What we as crazy Christians see is an alternative universe. We see dreams and possibilities. We see new life as always possible. Where a Zacchaeus will give ½ his possessions to the poor and pay back four times as much from anyone he has defrauded. Where we can offer hope to someone who no longer sees good around them. A world where the experience I had with the youth at the event in Laramie witnesses to me and other. A world where we see love as the greatest power and gift that can be offered to others.

Our vision can change the world. Like God told Habakkuk, if it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.

We are never told in the book of Habakkuk what was written on those tablets, so we can fill them in with our words and our vision. However, by the end of this OT book in the Bible Habakkuk finds the answer in understanding that God, the Lord, is his strength. Not a bad start and end for a way to live a life. Perhaps that will be part of what is on our tablets. What else shall we write?

Thanks be to God.