

Rappahannock Christian Church – 9/5/10

Dr. Kenneth Wilbur

Communion Meditation

On this Labor Day Weekend, It appropriate to turn our attention to the subject of labor and work. It's appropriate too, as we come to this Table, to remember the work of God that was accomplished through Christ. His work of salvation was accomplished on the cross and through it He has enabled us to come to him. No more anxious striving to "make the grade" -which no human being can ever do! I have often made an example by asking, "Suppose you died today and God said to you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" what would you tell him? You could say, 'Well, I've been a good person'? → Wrong answer! The best thing you can say is 'I do NOT deserve to be let into your heaven! I am a sinner! BUT through your grace, and through the blood of Jesus, who died to save me from my sins, I trust that you will receive me.'"

This is what has been accomplished for us. It is through the work of Christ that we have this promise of salvation. This is what we are celebrating today at this Table. So let's remember and think and thank God for all that He has accomplished for us in Jesus Christ.

Matthew 26:26-29 – While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

Seasons of Life

Today we will be reading from one of the better known passages in the Scriptures. A popular song was made from this passage in Ecclesiastes in the 1960s, so millions of children from that era will readily recognize it.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 – There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,

a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,

a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,

a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,

a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,

a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,

a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Many of you well know that I thoroughly despise hot weather. Summer was particularly awful this year with breaking temperature records and all that, but over all, I just really, really don't like the summer at all. Being from New England, I like cooler weather. There are places in the world that don't have a change of seasons like we do. But despite the heat of summer, I do enjoy the changes. You appreciate the cool weather all the more after a hot season like we have been through!

Whether you are in a place where seasons change or not, people's lives change. The writer of Ecclesiastes recognizes this, saying that "there is a time (that is, a correct, proper time) for every activity."

This passage is part of the Wisdom Literature of the Bible. We don't talk a lot about Israel's Sages, so let me say a word or two about what they believed and taught. One thing the Wise taught was that God infused the creation with a certain degree of orderliness -something stemming from God's own nature. Night followed day. Spring followed winter. The birds flocked and migrated in a predictable fashion. The tides are predictable. One would be wise to pay attention to this and act in accord with it. Not to do so would be to play the fool. If you are going to plant, the Wise Man said, don't do it before the dry season or you won't get a harvest. Will you speak insolently to the king? No! You would be a fool to do so. This is what the writer of Ecclesiastes is doing in this passage. He is teaching wisdom.

Take a look at this list. How many of these things have you done? Most of us have done many of them. Perhaps you have done them at the right time and maybe not. Have you ever spoken when you should have kept quiet? Most of us have. If so, then you know the consequences and you know what the Wise Man is talking about.

It seems to me that the seasons of the year, and the activities that are done in them are, in some ways, parallel to what we might call the "seasons of life." We move from childhood to adolescence to young adulthood, to middle age and seniority. These stages of life are like the climatic seasons, don't you think? In springtime things are new, young, tender. In the summer they grow stronger and bigger. It is then that we start to get an idea what a person will turn out to be like. Then in fall you get the harvest and hopefully there's a lot's fruit from a life well-lived. Last comes winter when things begin to shrivel up and even to die off.

Now, this doesn't mean that when you are a senior you can't do anything that you did when you were young. You may still be able to do a lot of things. You may be slower, though, right? Or doing them may be painful and hard. There are also some things that you simply will NOT be able to do ever again.

The seasons of life can have an effect on your attitude and your expectations as you go through life. As we experience the passing of the seasons we learn to be cautious and perhaps to take fewer chances. Hardship, pain and loss tend to make us less enthusiastic about life. "It's hard to teach an old dog new tricks!" We may become less inclined to pour ourselves into any pursuit.

The New Testament has a different take on all of this. Jesus and the writers of the New Testament insist that we are born from the womb, but we can also be "born again." We can be made alive in Christ, made spiritually alive. We become a "new creation," as the Apostle Paul describes it. When, through faith, we surrender to Christ's Lordship we take upon ourselves God's goals and purposes. Our usefulness, in God's kingdom, never ends.

Yes, there are still going to be limitations. God gives us a limited time to live, limited physical strength, limited abilities and talents. But when the world tells you to give up and go away, the church does not say that. ***The church says "Young or old, man or woman, lawyer or housewife, whoever you are, we want you! We need you. You are important and precious."***

So we have to ask ourselves, what does God want me to do? We all want one another, we all need one another and we all enjoy working together along life's journey.

Benediction

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. ~ 2 Corinthians 13:14