

Prayer of the Holy Spirit

Good Morning Beloved Ones!

I have a story to share... it came to mind as we were preparing for the Spring Fling and I purchased a full set of Tupperware bowls (which I gave to my brothers & sister as Easter baskets this year). The story goes like this:

*Back in the day ...before MICROWAVE ovens... lived a family with 5, soon to be six, children. Close in age, It was a rush to get everybody ready for school and out the door to catch the school bus.*

*We became independent in getting our breakfasts...pouring cereal and milk, and eating. Each of us had a Tupperware cereal bowl, our own specific color (green, blue, pink, peach, yellow).*

*Well, one day, child #3, decided he wanted hot cereal. (I was in Jr High and had already left for my bus).*

*So he got out his bowl, poured the sugar smacks into his bowl and promptly placed his bowl on the front burner of the electric stove and turned the burner on to heat his cereal.*

*Praise the Lord... my Mother came in before the flames reached the ceiling, and covered the mess with the soup pot lid...but the damage was done- to the element and to the Tupperware bowl. My stubborn, stiff-necked, independent brother learned WHY we had the rule - do not use the stove without supervision!*

My brother, in this case, reveals this is part of who we are...and our human nature...to seek creative solutions to a situation...yet too often we do not follow the rules/guidelines we are given.

God's people are no different... and have a history of being unfaithful to the covenant with God.

In our series, we have heard how God called Abraham to do a new thing... to go to a new land, leaving all his inheritance and known community, for a

place that God would reveal...Abraham was blessed with land and with offspring, and given the task to be a blessing to the nations.

And even when God's people were unfaithful, God was still faithful.

This week we hear the prophets calling the people back to a faithful way of life... for even as God was faithful, the people were disobedient. So much so in Judges 17:6 we hear, '*In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.*' Meaning, though Joshua had brought God's people to the Promised Land, after Joshua passed, and the generation of people had passed, the people of God forgot to follow God's ways and chose to follow the ways of others.

Even the system of offering animal and grain sacrifices in the temple to cleanse of sin did not please the faithful God of covenant. For it was NOT the way of God...to appease or earn favor & forgiveness.

This is a 'works' based system... and we know there is NOTHING we can do to earn God's love & favor. In addition, the prosperity of the people made it much harder to bless/share others. The more we have, the harder it is to give away. In fact, it is harder to see those who are in need (Luke 16:19-31).

So a quick story attributed to Peter Marshall, Chaplain of the US Senate goes like this...

*A man came and said, 'When I was young & didn't make much money it was easy to tithe, it was easy to give God 10%; but now I make more and it is harder, it is a bigger amount. I'm not sure I can part with that money.'*

*Chaplain Marshal prayed with him, 'Lord, reduce this man's salary so that he can tithe again.'*

Be careful what you pray for, I guess. But remember, God has blessed us so that we would share our blessing with others.

Yes, the people failed to share their blessing...they failed at being witnesses for God. They failed to remember God and God's faithfulness.

The good news is that God has never forgotten nor abandoned God's people. Prophet after prophet was sent to call the people ... to get their attention ...and to bring them back into relationship once more.

Even while in exile, Isaiah's words of promise bring hope... as we heard today. And there's More good news...God adjusted the strategy.

What... you may be thinking... God changed?! Well, consider... how God plucked an ordinary person to do an extraordinary thing... over and over... Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah...the list goes on of prophets, until... one is SENT to be face to face with the created peoples... one is sent to teach and re-present with authority... one is SENT to serve as the Word that became flesh and died for us, once and for all. (But that's Next week's message).

I had the honor of presiding at funeral this past Monday for a family back in another age of my life. As I engaged with people who had come to witness and give thanks, a woman said to me... *'it's a crazy time, isn't it...the world we are living in?'* She made a reference to the end times... and I reminded her of Jesus' words, 'no one knows the day or the hour'.

Friends, the key point is this, we are standing at a crossroad, able to choose a direction to walk. The question is... will we choose to listen to our God story given to us as an inheritance...as a blessing? Will we choose to share how God has been present and at work in our life? Will we, by our words, point to God, and be a reflection of who God is in the world?

The thing is, today, being silent is being complicit in the ways of the world and the powers that seek to rule over the world.

We must use our voices; we must speak words of faith, offer prayer and gather hope. Remember, do not fear, Holy Spirit will empower us to speak our story and plant seeds for God's kin-dom.

May it be so. Amen.

We have a vision of being faithful to God even as God has been faithful to SJ lo these 227...soon to be 228 years! This vision is kin-dom minded! *And may require doing things differently than had been done in the past.*

How can we be part of building God's kin-dom? One way is by sharing our stories, right where we are in life.

God empowers us through Holy Spirit...to have courage, boldness, and share our God stories. Think: What has God done for you? Who have you encountered that needed your story?

Remember... and realize that your journey of faith is NOT just for you! Your journey is part of the story of the cosmos (the world God created)! These stories are designed to be shared so that we can be 'the city on a hill and let the light shine for all to see.' (Mt 5:14)

Be thinking of your God story...that moment that you became aware of God's work in your life. Write it down...snap photos or find photos of that moment. I want to include one or two in the upcoming Seashell...

We will have the opportunity to share and perhaps produce a story book of God's stories in Saint James. Amen.

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The inheritance of our faith is to attend to God. • To attend to God's work and witness in the world. • To attend to Christ's command to love God and neighbor. • To attend to the Spirit's stirrings deep within us and in those around us.