

June 28, 2015

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts together
be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, our rock and our redeemer.....Amen*

From today's Second letter from St Paul to the Church in Corinth

"The one who had much did not have too much,
and the one who had little did not have too little."

I would like to read the same scripture as written in "The Message", the Holy Bible translated into contemporary language:

"Nothing left over to the one with the most

Nothing lacking to the one with the least "

This past couple of weeks we have experienced in this country, a number of events in our society that have felt like earth tremors.

Firstly the horrific events in the AME Church in Charleston, followed by a surge of outrage against the slaughter of those nine dear souls, a level of outrage rarely experienced in our country.

A condemnation of evil that has woken up many lethargic minds to the realization of the presence of the evil one in our society. Evil that is personified in racism.

Then this week, two vitally important US Supreme Court rulings. Whether you politically support Obamacare or not, the Act has resulted in more than 11 million people being covered by Health Insure that were previously hung out to dry !!

Then the magnificent event yesterday whereby if two adult human beings love each other, then it is the law of the land , in the entire United States, that they may legally be married.....without gender discrimination !!!

Today's Epistle reading introduces another social issue that remains such a source of jealousy, resentment and friction in our society.....that is Economics, a society that allows such a divide between the rich and poor.

Today's reading from 2nd Corinthians created more questions than answers to our Wednesday Bible Study group this week. Just understanding what our Lord is saying to us is difficult enough, let alone the difficulty of the translation.

If our Wednesday group after more than thirty minutes of Study had difficulty with Paul's letter to the Corinthians.....then what will happen when in a couple of

minutes we conduct a pop quiz here this morning after our having heard the reading just once?

And no leaving the church for any reason before we hold the quiz.

I can hear people saying, "I wish I could have heard the reading better", "I wish I had been paying more attention", "Oh dear that was a bad time for a nap"

Well you can breathe again, we are not going to have the test, but I do believe very few if any of us would pass the test, and that includes your clergy persons.

Corinth at the time of Paul was not a Greek city but a Roman colony and only scant traces of the earlier Greek city have ever been found. What is known is that Corinth was an affluent, growing metropolis.

Some historians believe that Paul (or his representative...there are some of us who really don't believe that our beloved Paul found a way to be in more than one place at one time). Whether it was Paul or Pauline who we hear a lot about...he or she stayed more than eighteen months in Corinth.

This was the longest time Paul stayed anywhere in his travels, and it gave him the time to convert a large core of influential people with the money and resources to create a vibrant Christian church. The stay also gave him the time to really understand the society.

What he found there was a segmented society. There was evidence of great success in many fields. Lawyers, doctors, accountants, politicians, Roman Generals and high ranking officers, engineers and priests of the temple all living in big houses, living lavish lifestyles and loving and supporting each other, well at least families and friends....and I guess people who were important to them in their businesses.

This group had amassed material wealth and reserves; they attended Temple as time allowed and they contributed amounts of money they felt was appropriate.

Gated communities... generally so consumed with their own lives and careers that they had little time or interest in others in society. That is not a criticism...it was just how it was.

Then there was the middle income group of Corinthians, mostly well educated but perhaps people with more modest goals and ambitions for a different kind of wealth in their lives.

There were teachers, tradesmen, public servants, shop workers and deacons in that group, to name but a few. This group held their block parties, attended the temple on a regular basis, some contributed what they could get away with,

others were looking the other way when the plate came by and there were those who tithed or made a major contribution to the temple with their time and talents.

This group were also a "gated" community in that they worked hard, long hours and many were at the earlier stages of their careers. They were somewhat jealous of the more wealthy group but were fearful that they would lose their jobs. Many in this community lived from one paycheck to the next.

Then there were a third group of Corinthians who for whatever reason found it difficult to survive, let alone have their own homes. There was no social support system in Corinth in those days. No Obamacare, no unemployment benefits. You sank or swam based on your street smarts, the strength of your arm and so long as you remained healthy.

One unexpected expense would likely wipe you out financially.

The Temple would likely turn you away as being...well...."different". The less advantaged families and friends bonded together and supported and loved each other through thick and thin. There is nothing they would not do for each other and families stayed living close to each other...and so many not working...they were available to each other when needed.

So...St Paul arrives in Corinth with the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ that God the Father loves all of us human beings equally... no matter what our position in society, no matter what our resources are, no matter what house we live in.

No matter what our jobs are, no matter what our gender or sexual orientation is. No matter what our skin color is...no matter what our language is. No matter the extent of our vocabularies. No matter what our material goals are great or small. No matter how much we apply our energy in earthly endeavors. Jesus tells us that no matter where we stand in society in this life. In God's Kingdom we will all be treated in the same way.

In God's Kingdom all the artificial categories we create on earth are merged into one Community, standing shoulder to shoulder. All of us.....no exceptions.... all committed to each other.

St Paul brings the Good News of God's Kingdom but he very forcefully lets the people of Corinth and the people of Aurora, Illinois know that we can start the transition right now: For us to complete our current assignments and obligations, of course. But as we plan for the future let us all reassess our priorities.

No matter where we stand on the ladder of earthly success, whatever that word means to us.....let us stand shoulder to shoulder and use our resources to build the Kingdom of God right here on earth.

Right here at Trinity Episcopal Church in Aurora, Illinois. Let us open our arms and embrace all human beings and share the great love that we have right here in our own Community.

"Nothing left over to the one with the most

Nothing lacking to the one with the least "

As an addendum:

In the words of our newly elected Chicago born first black Presiding Bishop-Elect Michael Curry of North Carolina

"Nothing can stop the movement of God's love in the world".

.... Amen.

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