

World Communion – Our Common Prayer – Your Will be Done

Luke 4:16-21

¹⁶When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

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Who is it who invites people to come from east and west, north and south¹ to this table?

Who is the “Our Father” to whom we pray?

The challenge for us is not that we have the WRONG idea of who God is, but that we may not see the fullness of God’s character. And, if our God is too small, our lives are too small, or worse misguided.

Jesus welcomed little children and called us to have childlike trust in God, but Jesus also challenged adults to follow where he leads.

Jesus said, “Come to me...and I will give you rest”, but he also said “Go into the world and make disciples”.

Jesus prayed “Father, forgive them” but also said “Go and sin no more.”

On this World Communion Sunday, we focus on one aspect of God’s character that binds us together as a world-wide family of faith, and gives focus to our individual and collective lives of faith.

That character of God was revealed in Jesus’ inaugural address citing a passage in Isaiah

¹ Luke 13:29

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Notice how worldly Jesus’ focus was. He was at work to re-order God’s creation and to recreate the kind of world that God always intended.

That message was spoken by one of today’s prolific and prophetic Christian writers, Brian McLaren.

The Christian faith isn’t all about getting to heaven. It isn’t all about the church. It isn’t all about the individual spiritual life or “personal relationship with God.” It is about all of these things, but they aren’t the whole point, or even the main point. The main point is God’s saving love for creation, God’s faithfulness to all creation, God’s ongoing mission of healing a world torn by human injustice so that it can fulfill God’s original dream. It is about God’s kingdom coming to earth, and it is about God’s will being done on earth as it is in heaven.²

The word that captures that aspect of God’s character is “justice”. The biblical words for justice appear over a thousand times.³

Some of you have memorized one of the famous references in Scripture

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God.⁴

The Old Testament scholar Abraham Heschel has noted that “...very few ideas are so deeply rooted in the mind of biblical writers as the idea that justice and righteous are inherent to God’s character.”⁵ Heschel writes, “This is not an inference, but an a priori of biblical faith, self-evident; not an attribute added to [God’s] essence, but belonging to the idea of God. It is inherent to His essence and is identifies with His ways.”⁶

² Brian McLaren, [The Justice Project](#), BakerBooks, 2009, p. 18

³ See [The Justice Project](#), p. 23-24

⁴ Micah 6:8

⁵ [The Justice Project](#), p. 24

⁶ [The Justice Project](#), p. 24

Stated practically in the Book of Proverbs, “The Lord wants weights and measures to be honest and every sale to be fair.”⁷

And when Jesus taught about the judgment of the nations he said, “whenever you do it to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do it to me.”⁸

Today, we are reminded that we cannot love God fully without loving what (and WHO) God loves.

The God we worship and the very God to whom we pray is a God who cares about the poor and rejected, the people at the margins of society, the widows and the outcast.

Our God intends that we will care for the people of the world and work for fairness and help for those in need.

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I am pleased that our church family has shown concern for such people:

We have supported mission to the untouchables in India.

Work groups from our church have served the urban poor through the Open Hands Ministry in the Garfield section of Pittsburgh.

And children and adults alike have brought food to our vestibule grocery carts for the Food Bank in Verona.

This is our commitment to care for those for whom God cares. And our elders made the decision last year that 7 ½ percent of our contributions will go for mission. (Our goal is to increase that to a tithe or ten percent.)

Lest we simply feel good for doing good or think that we are being good citizens, justice is of the essence of God’s character and God’s work in the world.

And when we pray “thy will be done” we are praying that God’s priorities will be our priorities and that God’s concern for the poor will be our concern.

God cares that communities in Malawi don’t have clean drinking water.

⁷ Proverbs 16:11

⁸ Matthew 25:40

God cares that communities in Mexico are bullied by mafia type groups.

God cares that there are people who simply cannot support themselves and must be cared for by society.

Jesus came to

to bring good news to the poor.
to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And we are called to care for such in our lives.

This is not an easy task, nor is it always clear what is most helpful, but God's concern is clear and our call to take part in working for God's kingdom on earth is clear.

When, for example, is the right response prayer?

When do we give \$?

When do we encourage?

We cannot expect to always know, but what we can do is to

Assess the needs

Consider the options

Choose what appears to be prudent

Re-assess to learn how we did and what, if anything, we should change.

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We can begin by asking God to help us see where and what we need to work on.

Think for a moment about your family: the good AND the bad and any ugly.

Now listen to God's word

⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Where is your family out of sync with God's intention for love?

Tomorrow when you go to work, think of the people around you and the issues on your place, and some of the rough places you've been through at work. Then read that Scripture on love

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Where is your workplace out of sync with God's intention for love?

Then ask God to lead you to work for justice, that the things God is concerned about in your family would be your concerns, that God's interests for your place of work would be your interest.

And ask God to use you in some small way to make a difference.

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The God to whom we pray is this very God who calls us to be concern for the priorities Jesus has shown in his life and ministry. When we pray "thy will be done" it is a commitment to work for God's justice in the world.

Charge to the Congregation

For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.⁹

⁹ Ephesians 2:10