

*God of wisdom and love, source of all good, send your Spirit to teach us your truth
and guide our actions in your way of peace. Amen*

I wonder if any of you recognized the words of our call to worship this morning. “Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to get through this thing called life.” These words have been flashing through social media of all sorts in the last couple of weeks. It is the first line of the song “Let’s Go Crazy” by Prince. Now I acknowledge that many of you in the room might not be doing any grieving at the death of Prince, but those of us who lived our teens in the 80’s have lost some real icons in the last months. I’ve even seen some Meme’s requesting the God give us back Prince and Bowie in exchange for some US presidential candidates.

Now I was a fan of both these artists back in the day but I am not one to spend a lot of time grieving their loss and yet, I recognize many will. I saw this quote a couple days after Prince died and it made a lot of sense. “Thinking about how we mourn artists we've never met. We don't cry because we knew them, we cry because they helped us know ourselves.” (Juliette)

As these words by Prince flashed through social media and beyond my life has been flooded with found memories of the 80’s. The days when my life was simple. And then this viral tweet by Juliette flashed across my Facebook page and I thought - That’s it. It makes sense. I’m not singing “Purple Rain” at the top of my lungs because I loved and will miss Prince as much as this song reminds me of who I am and where I came from.

Immediately I began to think about the depth of truth of who I am and where I came from. I am a mother, a wife, a minister, a dragon boater, a martial artist, a daughter, a sister, a cousin, a granddaughter....and the list goes on. I come from a family with a deep faith history but most importantly I am child of God, created by... I am. It is in God, in the holy that I find my home, my core, the seed of my life.

As I thought this through I because to ponder that is why to this day every year we grieve the death of Jesus and celebrate the Resurrection so abundantly. The Resurrection is about companionship. Companionship with the one who knows us, and within that relationship we discover ourselves, gifts and foibles combined. Walking with Jesus for the disciples meant walking with the one who helped them discovered exactly who they were created to be.

In our gospel reading today Jesus offers his disciples the paraclete - the Holy spirit, the one who will walk along side us just as Jesus walked with the disciples during his life here on earth. “The primary reason for the gift of the Spirit is so that the

disciples might experience the presence of Jesus in his absence. The resurrection, all well and good, still means the departure of Jesus. And one extraordinary gift of the incarnation is knowing a kind of companionship for which we all long and desperately need.”

It is a relationship in which we are known and through being known we discover ourselves, we discover who we were created to be. Perhaps that is what drew the disciples to Jesus in the first place. In knowing him they came to know themselves. Resurrection promises a lifelong relationship with Jesus, with our creator. Companionship that is real and deep, companionship that brings us to life abundant as we discover our potential through discovering how completely we are loved.

The reading from Acts also points to companionship: “Come and stay at my home,” says Lydia (Acts 16:15). I think that a characteristic of living a resurrection life is the need for and the invitation to companionship. With the resurrection is companionship is secured. The resurrection promises lifelong companionship with Jesus and with God. Resurrection secures companionship when only isolation and separation are the likely result. The disciples and others likely left their lives and followed Jesus because he offered them a companionship and knowing that no one else ever had. We all long to be known in a way where we are loved just for being who we are, we simply hope to at least for a short time have someone willing to journey alongside us through thick and thin, through fire and rain, through it all.

In the last months some of you have lost close if not best friends and you grieve exactly that, you grieve the loss of the one who walked through life with you. I’ve lost close friends before and I know that hole, I still have a place that has never been filled after the loss of a dear companion. It likely never will be.

Karoline Lewis asked the question “I wonder to what extent our fear of death is not a fear of tombs or graves or urns but that there just might be some consciousness of being alone. Notice that so much of our resurrection imagination is reunion -- that we will be with our loved ones again. We are not meant to live companionless. Yet so many of us do.

According to online Merriam-Webster, companionship is “the good feeling that comes from being with someone else.” This criterion is worth some reflection. I’d like to think that the good feeling Jesus is going for has to do with the reason for the incarnation in the first place. I sense that many of us think we have companions. But having someone to do things with is not the same as experiencing a good feeling from being *with* that someone.

In the words of Prince, “Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to get through this thing called life.” That’s one reason for companionship. Getting through life is no small task. And true companionship is a kind of accompaniment that helps us live with a resurrection perspective.” Helps us live with hope and joy in the midst of this thing called ‘life.’

Let’s be honest we are, well most of us are longing for companionship. Perhaps that is even the reason you are here. We know what it is to be without companionship don’t we. We know discord, divorce, hostility, separation, antagonism, strangeness. Sadly, I suspect many of us know those experiences and feelings more than we know the true friendship and accompaniment of companionship.

So that makes we wonder if we are true representatives of our resurrection faith. If Jesus suggests that part of what the resurrection means is true companionship. Walking with, alongside, knowing, real deep friendship and companionship. Then if we offer that it would change our world.

An african Proverb says “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together” This message of companionship for the disciples by the spirit is a message for us, a message that we are never alone. That God companions with us but I believe this is also a message which calls for us to walk with one another. Living the resurrection is about walking with Jesus as we companion with one another. “The need for companionship is as basic, perhaps, as the need for that which keeps us alive.”

That is, in part, John’s point. The resurrection promises future companionship for us -- with God, with Jesus, with each other. But if the incarnation is true, that companionship promised in resurrection has to be known here and now.

True companionship is hard to find, Where we hope for it, it fails us. Where we trusted in it, it deserts us. Where we count on it, it leaves us. But the truth of the resurrection is Companionship for life.”

So let me challenge us to be the type of friend that offers the hope and promise of resurrection living to one another. “Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to get through this thing called life.”

Together.

May we so live.

Amen.