

22 Pentecost, Proper 24

October 21, 2018

Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's

Isaiah 53:4-12 God's plan for humankind is to send someone who will save God's people, but he will come as a servant.

Hebrews 5:1-10 Christ is our High Priest, appointed by God.

Mark 10:35-45 James and John – grant us to sit at your right and left, in your glory. Jesus said, 'whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant; must be slave of all.'

There are images of God that intimidate me. Forty days of rain, wiping out all but the animals and people on Noah's arc. The burning bush and the divine voice coming from the cloud that told Moses; "Go to pharaoh and tell him to set my people free!" The sky filled with angels, singing praises and announcing the birth of Jesus.

Jesus taught about another personality of God. Although all-powerful, Jesus' teaching of God was not a description of management by intimidation; but loving parenthood. Isaiah, Hebrews, Mark readings – all reflect God's calling of a Messiah who serves; not as a slave, but as a leader who serves.

This is not a male-only role. There are plenty of examples in Scripture of women who modeled the quality of servanthood;

Deborah – judged the Israelites for 40 years with authority and strength.

Esther – used her position as queen to ensure the welfare of her people.

The woman with the issue of blood – whom Jesus healed – boldly sought her healing and release from the isolation brought from her illness.

Mary Magdalene – anointed Jesus before his crucifixion, was with him while others hid, was at the tomb, was the first to see the risen Lord. Showed her fierce loyalty to Jesus, even when it was dangerous to show it.

Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus...

Martha – She honored the importance of hospitality, working to serve Jesus. She made sure things got done that had to get done. Later, she was boldly candid with Jesus – "If you had been here sooner, my brother Lazarus would not be dead." (Calling a spade a spade.) Are you a Martha?

Mary of Bethany (may be the same person as Mary Magdalene) anointed Jesus with oil, stopped doing anything else rather than miss a word of what Jesus wanted to teach. She felt no greater goal than to live in God's presence. Are you a Mary?

Today we are honoring you girls and women, young and old, for the ways that you are Martha, and the ways that you are Mary. We celebrate your being woven from both personalities; modeling that our life in Jesus is a life of servanthood AND living in God's presence. It is a life of piety in action, study that guides, and faith that persists.

The women of St Luke's walk in the company of Phoebe, who led an early church in the empire of Rome.

Perpetua of Carthage, whose witness of her faith led to her martyrdom in the 3rd century.

Julian of Norwich, who wrote beautifully of her betrothal to Christ, and who proclaimed 'all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.'

Sojourner Truth, who stood against oppression of women, and delivered her famous 'Ain't I a woman' speech in 1851.

On behalf of the men of St Luke's, I want you to know that we guys appreciate you so very much. I have a small gift for you – a reminder of our honoring your values and your strengths. (Cross key fobs.)

I know that I get caught up in the mechanics of getting the job done; whatever job I'm working on. I have learned to honor the insights that Ruth brings into my life; the intuition, the reminder to ask God to be part of my thought process, the sensitivity to remember that the best ideas can come from unexpected places. I learn a lot about my life as a Christian by valuing the Mary and Martha temperaments of Ruth and all of the women of St Luke's. I value the insights we hear from Rev Ardyss – I see the value of male and female perspectives in our homilies and ministries.

Jesus reprimanded James and John to not worry about who will be sitting next to him in the heavenly Kingdom, but instead to think about what kind of a job they are doing at being servant leaders; focusing on their piety, and study, and servanthood.

I pray for God to bless each girl and young lady and woman of St Luke's, as you bring blessing to all of us who love you and need you.

Amen