

Sermon

Zion 1/20/19 "Learn" The Way of Love: Practices for a Jesus centered life

"As Christians we strive to follow the Way of Jesus. His way is the Way of Love, and that love has the power to change lives and change the world."

Last week you heard from Rev Ellen about the practice "**Turn**" - to pause, listen and choose to follow Jesus. To reorient ourselves to a Jesus centered life.

Today I will speak to you about the practice "**Learn**" - to reflect on scripture each day, especially on Jesus' life and teachings.

By engaging in this practice, we have the opportunity to draw nearer to God and God's word can then dwell in us. When we open our minds and hearts to scripture, we learn to see God's story and God's activity in everyday life.

In our Book of Common Prayer (on page 236) the collect reads, "Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them...".

I've always liked that - inwardly digest them. So, they feed us and become part of the fabric of our being...

So, let's think about how we learn. How do we learn - anything? There are many paths to learning, right? We learn through study, through faithful practice, by observing - then trying it out ourselves.

There are times when we learn by our mistakes - that's usually the hard way.

For example, learning a new language or to play an instrument: both are challenging endeavors and take a great deal of time and effort to accomplish.

For most of us developing and maintaining skills is not easy. First, we must commit ourselves to the task and stick with it, then we also must find *the teacher best suited* to help us learn and reach our goal.

For those of us on the journey to a Jesus centered life, whether this journey is brand new endeavor or a return trip from a faith challenged hiatus, Jesus is that teacher.

"By reading and reflecting, especially on the life and teachings of Jesus" ...these are the tools we have to reach our goal - Scripture.

With Scripture - we study the Word - we observe how Jesus lived, what he taught - then we practice, daily, what we have learned - by living in a more kind, compassionate and generous way. The Way of Love.

There are two sides to this practice, however.

Someone graduates from medical school after many years of study, becomes an intern at a hospital so that they can begin to utilize the skills they've developed.

But learning continues.

Under seasoned, more experienced mentors they hone their skills and gain more knowledge to help them become better and better at what they do.

Those seasoned, more experienced mentors have not stopped learning – they remain students their whole careers – continuing education on the newest procedures, techniques, medications, legal/ethical issues and so forth...they are teachers and they are students.

The learning is lifelong. What they gain through study they teach to those just starting out.

The same is true for us. We, as students of Christ, take what we learn and offer it to the world. We are students and we are teachers.

We reflect the teachings of Jesus as we live each day in a more mindfully loving way; teaching by how we present ourselves, how we treat others, through our words and actions, setting examples for those who observe us in our daily living and hopefully planting seeds along the way.

Learning is lifelong.

And so it is with striving for and maintaining a Jesus centered life.

Our lives are multi-faceted, we go through many, many changes and challenges as the years go by.

How do we remain on this journey, on this way of love through it all? How do we continue to incorporate what we study in the gospels into those times that cause us pain, worry, doubt, fear?

How do we continue to grow, to have our faith and understanding mature?

Hear, read, mark, learn: How we do so is unique to each of our situations but so essential for us all.

Take the time: you have 10 minutes, If I do you do! Put down the phone, tell the family you're in your own timeout. Close the door, go for a walk, sit in your car, whatever it takes...then read.

Find that Gospel that appeals to you most – there's four of them so you have choices. Read. Find a story of one of Jesus's teachings. Sit with it. Feel it. Inwardly digest it.

Find a psalm that lifts your spirit. When you do go back to it in times of stress and let it be a balm for your soul.

The Way of Love includes you...not just what you can give but what you allow to be given to you.

Let the study of scripture feed the spark of love that lies within you so you can shine more brightly in your own lives and in this world that so desperately needs its darkness dispelled.

I leave you with these words from our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry:

“I pray we will grow as communities following the loving, liberating, life-giving way of Jesus. His way has the power to change each of our lives and to change this world”.

Amen.

Deacon Carol Archer