

Pride Sunday, June 28, 2020
Grace Episcopal Cathedral, San Francisco
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Recorded remotely from Alexandria, VA (VTS)

From today's Psalm:

- 1 I will sing of your steadfast love, My God [O Lord], forever;

with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.
- 2 I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;

your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. AMEN.

Good Morning and Happy Pride Day!

If this were any other Pride Day, this would be the point where we would have hooting and hollering, we'd be cheering with the festiveness this day has come to represent for the community of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other sexual minorities, also known as the LGBTQIA+ community. I trust some of you are shouting in your homes, and I know that my heart is filled with memories of Pride Days gone by...especially my first Pride March: the beauty and the spectacle, the empowerment and of course, the music and dancing.

Today marks the 50th anniversary of the first Pride March, the Christopher Street Liberation Day March, held on the first anniversary of

the Stonewall Uprising in New York City. And although for all of our well-beings, we are not having Pride Marches, we are indeed witnessing, and some of us participating in various ways, in the ongoing struggle, the ongoing movement for human rights, as people march in the streets across the nation and the world, demanding that black and brown bodies be treated with the dignity and respect that is the right of every person.

And for those who know history, we understand that the demand for equal rights and protection under the law being made today is another manifestation of that demand made in the Village 51 years ago. The Stonewall Inn catered to the most marginalized in the gay community, a description that sounds painfully familiar: people of color, gender non-conforming folks, homeless youth and transgender people, who survived on the streets hustling what they could, even their own bodies. Faced with yet another violent police raid, where the primary transgression was their very existence as LGBTQ persons, the queens rose up, as others before them sat-in, and fought back, leading to three days of rioting, which galvanized and organized LGBT societies into activists. Today we remember and celebrate Marsha P. Johnson, who was part of the Stonewall Riots, an advocate for justice and equal rights, and Sylvia Rivera who together with Marsha established STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries) to help homeless young drag queens, gay youth and trans women.

They represent a prophetic move embodying God's truth, a self-evident truth declared although not yet realized in this nation's founding documents, that all "are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty

and the pursuit of Happiness.” And as Jeremiah attests to, and we ourselves have witnessed, a prophetic word is not welcome when it calls us to account for our transgressions against each other, when it calls out injustice and unfaithfulness to God’s word and will for us. False prophets may declare prosperity and peace, but while God’s children, and especially the least of these, the marginalized and the oppressed, are crushed with reckless disregard for the sanctity of their lives, we will know no peace. No justice, no peace.

For those of us who believe, who know and understand the wisdom and the power of Jesus, who seek to live in a Kin-dom of abundant and everlasting life, where justice and righteousness are the watch words and peace and love are enjoyed, we have our marching orders here in the 10th chapter of Matthew. I invite you to read it to understand the times in which we are living and the call of God to live as faithful disciples, students of the Good News.

In today’s gospel reading we are both encouraged and challenged. Jesus after describing the hard road that awaits those who follow him, encourages them, reminding them that as they seek to speak and practice justice, heal and care for the wounded, be and learn from the marginalized, they will be a blessing and they will be blessed. They will be blessed by those who welcome them, providing hospitality, however basic, even offering them a drink of water, which in the desert is no small thing.

The gospel lists this triad: the prophets, the righteous and the little ones, and they can describe different members of the community, but they also

describe the interrelated aspects of our discipleship. One scholar describes them this way: the prophets bring “proclamation and miraculous demonstrations of divine power,” the righteous demonstrate an “enduring pursuit of justice and of the healing and restoration of relationships,” and the little ones, the vulnerable, discounted, devalued, show that this whole enterprise is God’s mission, we are “wholly dependent on God’s power and presence.” (Saunders)

That last group, the little ones, might come as a surprise. We might have expected “the wise ones,” or “the holy ones,” (Saunders) but instead it reflects reality, how God’s mission is lived out in the world: change does not, and never has come from some hero, some eloquent speaker, some person in power. What was true in 1857 is true in 2020, in the words of Frederick Douglass: “Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.” Or in the words of June Jordan, “we are the ones we have been waiting for.”

Here lies the encouragement and the challenge. Reading this gospel in today’s context, we are invited to understand that this is about us coming and going. That we are to live into our call to be prophets, speak truth, show miraculous power, what God can do through us; to be righteous and give ourselves to the enduring pursuit of justice and healing; to be the little ones, vulnerable, learning, growing. And that although it will not be easy we will be welcomed and refreshed, those who will minister to us will be blessed as we are blessed by their ministrations.

But we are also invited to understand that we are called to welcome and minister to the prophets, the righteous and the little ones. Those who

have felt the movement of the Spirit and are encouraged and bold, demanding their humanity be recognized and accorded the dignity and justice that are their inalienable right as the children of God.

Welcome those involved in the Black Lives Matter movement, who seek justice from the systems that are sworn to serve and protect, welcome those involved in the Poor People's Movement, who seek to unite us across lines of difference as we demand good and just salaries, health care, education, environmental care from institutions created to serve the common good, welcome those who continue the fight for LGBTQ rights, because the right to marry, and now, thank God, the right to work without suffering discrimination, is only the beginning of insuring equal rights.

We are to welcome these prophets, these righteous, these little ones: Not tolerate, and not suspect, or judge, or fear, but welcome, because we who seek to live into God's will understand that by welcoming these strangers, we may be entertaining angels unaware. (Hebrews 13:2)

In these welcoming and refreshing encounters we, "us and them," we, will be blessed and we will be a blessing. These relationships will strengthen us, feed us, and help us to grow. Together we will learn to live more fully into God's call for us, that we would be fully human, humane in our treatment of one another and of all God's creation, that we might have life and have it more abundantly. (John 10:10).

So today we remember and celebrate those who have gone before us and all those who journey with us in seeking justice. Let us remember and celebrate our call to be righteous and prophetic little ones, relying on

the power of God to transform us and through us the world. Let us welcome one another, and keep the feast. May the party begin!