

“Do Not Be Weary”

Isaiah 65:17-25; *Isaiah 12*; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Luke 21:5-10

On the 50th anniversary of D-Day and the invasion of Normandy, Lloyd Graham, a retired Captain in the Naval Reserve and a faithful member of Sea Island, graciously accepted the invitation to lead our congregation in a Litany of Remembrance. Lloyd was there on June 6, 1944 as 150,000 American, British and Canadian forces landed on 5 beaches along a 50 mile stretch of heavily fortified coast in the effort to push the Nazi's out of France and back to Germany. As Lloyd stood up and walked down the center aisle approaching the pulpit, there was a holy silence. Remembering the horrific violence of that day and the days that followed, the suffering and loss of life, the Litany of Remembrance was a sacred moment as a church family took pause to remember, to give honor, and to give thanks.

In one of his letters to the early church the Apostle Paul offered the following advice and words of wisdom, “Sisters and Brothers, do not be weary in doing what is right.” For nearly three centuries we as a free nation have practiced what Abraham Lincoln referred to as the great American experiment of self-government. In honor of our veterans and those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice “doing right” in order that we might enjoy the wonderful gifts of freedom and liberty, I think it appropriate in our worship this morning to offer thanks to God for the many veterans who have served this nation so unselfishly by taking our hymnbooks, turning to Hymn # 338 and standing as we raise our voices in an old favorite, “O Beautiful for Spacious Skies.”

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And the Apostle Paul wrote, “Sisters and brothers, do not be weary in doing what is right.” Every chapter and verse, and every story that is recorded in the Bible is recorded within a special context. Passages of the Bible cannot be read and understood if we do not know the setting in which the stories were told, and the circumstances and situations that dictated and warranted a theological response from the writer.

Focusing on Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, we believe it was written some 20 or so years after the death and resurrection of Christ. Having played a role in founding and developing the church at Thessalonica, Paul knew these people well and obviously loved them or he would not have taken the occasion to provide a word of wisdom in a time of crisis. This was the issue. Paul wrote the letter to address a significant and growing number of Christians in the church who believed that the promised return, the second coming of Jesus was imminent. In light of this conviction, Christians basically ignored their work and sat on their bottoms. The fellowship of the church was becoming dysfunctional. True to form, Paul issued a strong response to the problem. In the name of Jesus Christ, he admonished his friends to stay away from believers who were living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they had received, learned and accepted. And Paul wrote, “Get back to work. Do your work quietly. Earn a respectable living and do not be weary in doing what is right.”

These ancient words of wisdom from Paul resonate with us who live in the 21st century. Do your work quietly, earn a respectable living and do not be weary doing what is right. The work schedule for last Monday was somewhat demanding and intense. In the midst of the regular duties and responsibilities associated with the work of the parish at the beginning of a new week, Kay had graciously offered to prepare the meal for the annual meeting of the Session Council and Diaconate. It was a labor of love that necessitated shopping, preparation, cooking and baking, a full day. I was in and out of the kitchen from time-to-time to offer a word of support, but as the afternoon pressed on I found an apron and never took it off.

While Jack was out and about making visits, Charlie offered to pick up our grandson Keeler at the end of the school day since Kay was not at home. On his way out the door, Charlie said with a smile that he was going to spoil Keeler by getting him some ice cream, which he knew Keeler likes. However, when Charlie found Keeler on the playground and walked him to the car, Charlie advised him that he was going to treat him with some ice cream as a mid-afternoon snack. Keeler quickly responded with the story that Mossy Oaks Elementary School does not provide lunch for their students. Instead of ice cream, Keeler had something else in mind when he asked, "Uncle Charlie, can we go the Subway? I'm hungry!" So, Uncle Charlie chauffeured Keeler to Subway.

After a nice rewarding meal, Uncle Charlie escorted Keeler to the playground at the Waterfront when after a few minutes of play, Keeler made one additional request, "Uncle Charlie, can we go to the Lolli Pop Store?" On Monday afternoon, helping Kay and I who were in the kitchen, and helping Shay and Laura who were still at work, Charlie made a little boy very happy by investing personal and valuable time, listening to a child's stories from the day, and showing the grace of friendship.

In response to the wisdom of Paul, "Do not be weary doing what is right;" I would simply add that in response to the present political environment, we not grow weary doing what is kind and beneficial for the common good. The world is in desperate need of acts that imitate the ways of Christ, shows kindness, builds bridges of friendship, and fosters a warm and genuine spirit of community. Christians cannot make a positive difference in the world if we are disinterested and idle, apathetic and angry. As we look to the future, may we be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry (James 1:19), may we practice the grace of caring for one another, listening to one another, and doing things for others without expecting anything in return.

Jesus talked about a world manipulated by words of deception, and rumors of war and insurrections. Jesus also talked about natural disasters and cosmic explosions leading to confusion, persecution and people turning against one another. By way of everything we see and hear, the words of Jesus appear rather timely. And Jesus says, "Be careful who you listen to. Do not be terrified. Listen to my voice and stand fast. By your endurance you will gain your souls." In light of the heated rhetoric in the public square, let us not grow weary doing what is right as we know it in the name of Jesus Christ, and may we not be weary or grow tired in our effort to be kind and gracious in our treatment of others. Amen.