

Pastor Roy's sermon from June 7, 2015

This weekend is Synod Assembly at Messiah College. The weekend's business, worship, and meetings conclude this morning with worship. Some churches will have a live video feed of the service with communion shared with those in Grantham. I opted for a simpler approach, use some of Bishop Dunlop's ideas for his sermon in my own. And you're in luck, my version is much shorter than his.

With the conclusion of last week's services for Trinity Sunday, we are back into ordinary time—the season of Pentecost. The preparation seasons of Advent and Lent followed by their festivals celebrating the birth of Jesus and the resurrection of Christ—these are past. . .now we live into the reality of God coming among us—into the reality of the God-man Jesus Christ dying and rising before us, with us, and in us. God with us. Our life inseparable from God's life. Our lot securely bound in the life of God.

During ordinary time, we practice God's presence. We practice it in the life of prayer which bursts forth in acts of mercy and kindness. God's glory surrounds us. Our incompleteness and brokenness cannot undo the glory of God in us and around us. We learn of God's faithfulness during ordinary time. As we do with our spouses and friends, parents and children. It's easy to be faithful during holidays, while on vacation. Excitement and energy is in the air. But once the high energy and good times are past, it's a different story, we lean on those closest to us because the ordinary times can be wearisome. But then is when we discover the true nature of our relationships. During common time. Then we learn that we can practice the discipline of caring and being cared for by those with whom we spend our common time. Thanks be to God for all of the common relationships which give us courage—including that of prayer on a typical day.

Sorry, that is not the end of my sermon. The Gospel lesson today has Jesus being harassed by religious leaders and his very own family. The religious leaders disagree with Jesus' radical teachings emphasizing God's presence and mercy in the common places of life. Oh, they had no problem with noticing God in the common, they got nervous about his popularity and the fact that he did not emphasize the trappings of synagogue, temple, and law. More and more he seemed able to upset their comfortable world with talk of justice and God's mercy freely granted. Surely he was from the dark side. Evil incarnate. [We sometimes decide whether something is good or bad, without realizing it, based on whether it inconveniences us or calls us to let go of something that we hold dear. So our first reaction is, "Oh, that can't be good!"]

Jesus' message was always very personal. It was not about supporting an institution. It was utterly simple, not complicated. It was about loving people--serving people--living God's grace. Yes, institutions are necessary, but even in the institution of the church our main objective is faith, not organizational flow charts or buildings. Therefore, when we see the institutional aspect of the Gospel changing with an appearance of decline, we should not be startled or frightened as if the Spirit of God were departing from us. The Spirit of God is well and good. Grace and mercy are powerfully at work in our world today. Yes, there is trouble, but no, it is no challenge to the Spirit of God. Instead, trouble is where the Spirit of God is always at work in the world today.

No, institutional Judaism did not welcome Jesus, and Jesus' *family* is at odds with his ministry too. They were probably less concerned about what he was saying and more concerned that his life seemed to be spiraling out of control. They felt he needed to stop and come home for a while, rest, and regain his senses. Indeed, Jesus is catching it on all sides. He turns and faces his followers and says, "Who are my mother and my brothers? Here! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." A new kind of family. Family formed by commitment to the Gospel. Following the wind of the Spirit. The true institution of Jesus Christ is a family of people who love and follow him in freedom and joy.

Baptism and communion remind us of God's freedom to pour out this blessing of true spirituality—relationships of mercy and justice.

So fear not, we are in a good place, a place of mercy and care, a place of fellowship, of friendship, of growth and peace. In this common space of Pentecost we will be challenged to practice. Practice courage. Practice justice. Practice the life of prayer which opens our ears and our eyes to beauty around us. Opens us to *joyful* opportunities to love and serve those who *need* friends and family. To discover in one another mother, son, daughter, sister, brother, father in those who struggle into the will of God. Prayer and practice open us to discover the building of God's people and kingdom not built with hands, but built with an eternal reach throughout time and space. Far reaching in this moment building communion with all the saints. All the children of God. Sisters and brothers, let us pray with Jesus. Amen.