

Isaiah 5:1-7
August 15, 2010

Luke 12:49-56
St. James U.C.C.

FOLLOWNG JESUS

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Running a fruitful race, producing a fruitful vineyard, these are what God requires of God's people. In Isaiah 5:1-7, God has expected a crop of justice and righteousness from the vineyard of the people. But the guidance and tending that God has provided has not yielded good fruit because of the people's unfaithfulness.

God has sent prophets over and over again to warn the people that their behavior was unacceptable, but they refused to listen. God called Abraham, Moses and the led them through the wilderness and provided them people to show them the way but they refuse to follow. God has been clear from the very beginning that humans will be held responsible for their behavior. Take Adam & Eve for instance. They could have stayed in the Garden of Eden forever if they had obeyed God. Take the twelve tribes of Israel , they could have stayed in the Promised Land forever if they had obeyed God .

I love the story in the Bible about the father who asked his son to go to work in the vineyard and the son answered "No". But later he went to work in the vineyard just like his father asked. When the first son refused his father the father went to the second son and asked him and the son said "sure dad" but he never went. So which one did the will of the father? I think we all have had that experience

In Luke Jesus is headed to Jerusalem to fulfill the destiny for which he was born. It sounds like he is dreading what he had to be involved with, to "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!" Baptism means submersion, and Jesus knows that he has to be submerged in the suffering that is required to accomplish his Father's will.

How do you think the Jewish people took this message? The family was most important to them. Would they have to turn their backs on their fathers or mothers, sisters or brothers to follow Jesus?

In our Luke passage Jesus describes the cost of discipleship in terms of divisions it may cause. Even families may be divided by different understandings of what it means to be faithful. These conflicts can arise as believers reorder priorities, reshape behaviors, and rethink goals. Mary Stuart Van Leeuwen summarizes the New Testament understanding of family in this way: “Jesus own life and teachings underscore that marriage and family now take a back seat to the universal proclamation of God’s salvation and the formation of a new “first family” – a world wide kingdom building company in which membership depends not at all on blood lines but on faith in the Messiah”.

We can see this happening in families, where one or two follow Jesus teachings and the rest of the family goes different direction. It is so heart warming to see when families take their faith seriously. Working together, praying together, having meals together, gathering for Bible study, and working to create Christen home.

In the movie “Life as a House”, is a story about George Monroe, an architect with a big dream. He buys this dilapidated shack overlooking the ocean that stood by itself. As the years went by beautiful homes were built all around and the neighbors were disgusted with him because his shack brought down the value of his home. His wife left him because he was always saying, “someday I’ll to it.” Then poor George loses his job and has nothing to do, no one to turn to. He decided to rebuild his house, and in the process he finds time to talk to his neighbor and reconciles with his wife. George is no longer alone and is at peace that he can’t even imagine would be possible. Loneliness has given away to love.

Jesus will not ask of us anything that he has not done himself. He will not have us walk a path that he has not walked. I was thinking back on my own life. Married so young, each of us so stubborn in our own ways. Sometimes just striving for survival and then

coming together in our growing close to God. Knowing that if either one of us was to go, we had been pulled apart, and tied back together with God with a peace that can never be broken.

The choice is our today. We have been given free will to choose to love God with all our heart and soul, love our neighbor as ourselves, and to live God's law of love. To live a life of love is to be open to the Spirit of God and the adventure he has for us is way beyond all description. All we have to do is commit ourselves to God to guide us, and he teach us how to love.

There is a remarkable story told by a German Lutheran pastor. Some 450 years ago, a number of German farmers and their families left Germany to move to Eastern Europe, hoping to teach and demonstrate new agricultural methods. They were well received and so successful in their farming that they decided to stay. For over four centuries, German Lutherans could be found scattered throughout Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary.

In the 30's after Josef Stalin rose to primacy the German farmers judged to be enemies of the state and their faith posed a threat to Stalin's power. They were rounded up their leaders executed and the rest sent off to Siberia. For 40 years no word was heard and it was assumed that all had perished. In the mid 70's, a letter was received at the Lutheran headquarters in Germany. They wanted copies of Martin Luther's Small Catechism, baptismal and wedding certificates. The letter requested that they be printed in old German script. These Germans were alive and well in Siberia! A delegation of Lutheran ministers visited the isolated and long forgotten Siberian German Lutheran community. They had not had a pastor for 40 years but the life and faith of the people were in good order, they had kept their faith.

Like the German Lutherans, like to disciples we are called not be be the established order, not to do what is easiest or most comfortable but to be faithful. Even in leaving behind everything we know, even when we feel at our most exposed and vulnerable, we

can look to Jesus and persevere. Remember whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, God welcomes you and you are welcome here.

PRAYER

Gracious God, open our hearts and minds to the stories of faith that have nurtured your people through the ages. Guide us in our journey of faith Amen