

### 7.12.20 L15P6 Why Bother?

- Worship just doesn't look and feel the same
- Our worship just doesn't feel or look like it did back before the coronavirus disrupted just about everything in our lives
  - Now we come together, and there are fewer of us because many people are at risk and need to stay at home
  - Now we come together, and not just because of regulations, but out of love for one another we wear masks and sit six feet apart
  - Now we come together, and we listen to a cantor sing the hymns, instead of us singing them together
  - Worst of all, now we come together, and we cannot yet share the Lord's Supper after months of waiting
  - Worship just doesn't feel right even though we have been able to begin gathering again!
  - And probably all of us are a little disappointed, and we may even wonder why we bother?
- Today's scripture speaks to the question, "Why bother?"
  - Even though we can't sing together, and even though we can't mingle freely, and even though we can't receive the Body and Blood of Christ given for us – even with all of that, today's scripture tells us why it is still important if we are not at too much risk, to continue to gather for worship
  - When we gather either in person or by video, we are immersed in the Word of God that reaches the climactic Good News that Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again
  - This Good Word of God is so very important
    - Before there were books like bibles...
    - Before there were scrolls that were carefully unrolled, read, and rolled back up...
    - Before there were letters carried from people like Saint Paul to various churches, and these letters were then read out loud to the people, copied and shared with churches in other towns and cities...
    - Before that, people gathered to LISTEN to God's Word
    - Only in the last several centuries after the printing press and affordable publishing, have people

thought of the Word of God as something written down on paper in a book

- Before the Word of God was written, Moses taught the people
- Before the Word of God was written down, the prophets preached to the people
- Before the Word of God was written down, Jesus the Son of God proclaimed the Kingdom of God unlike anyone either before or since then
- And NOW when we gather for worship either in person or by video, one of the absolutely essential acts that stands at the very heart of worship, is hearing... hearing the Word of God read out loud, listening to how today's preachers seek to connect that Word with our lives, and allow the heard Word of God to work upon our hearts, minds, and lives to bring us to faith, and to nurture that faith within us
- In the soaring words of Isaiah in our first reading we hear this about the Word of God: "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. [55:10-11]"
- So many things are either missed or missing when we gather these days for worship during the pandemic, but the Word of God which is so essential is present, the Word of God is heard, and the Word of God is not empty, but through this Word, God accomplishes something in us
- And that's why we need to bother to worship either in person or online, even in these very lean weeks.
- After the prophet Isaiah, the parable from Jesus about the Word of God has even more to say these most unusual days
  - Probably most, if not all of us know this parable
  - A farmer went out and sowed and scattered seeds
    - Some seed fell on the hard-beaten path where it was exposed, and the birds swept down and ate it

- Other seed fell on rocky shallow soil, it began to sprout, but it had tiny roots and it was scorched and withered by the hot sun
  - Yet more seed fell among the thorns and weeds, which soon choked out the young grain
  - But some seed fell on the good soil, and not only did it sprout and thrive, but *it yielded a bountiful, and until then unimagined harvest*
- When we are immersed regularly in the Word of God, sometimes that Word either bounces off or goes unheard because of things happening in our lives that block our ears from hearing
- But, OTHER times, even when we may not realize it, and often when we don't even feel inspired like some kind of revival – at times even when we don't expect it, the Word of God enters our ears, and enters our hearts and minds and lives, and plants faith, and nurtures faith, because that Word never returns to God empty
- In these difficult days when worship is lean, we miss close fellowship, and the Lord's Supper cannot yet be shared until we are confident of low risk and acceptance of more distant worship – in these difficult days of an historic pandemic when future generations will look back and learn about us and study us, let us continue to immerse ourselves in the Word of God that is heard, the Word of God that creates and shapes our lives of faith, and this Word that creates a legacy of faithfulness to both Christ and our neighbor, so that God's Word-planted faith in us may inspire, and be remembered by future generations when they look back and study us.