

Nov 23, 25 Christ the King SP ?Res

The words were out of my mouth before I knew what I was saying. "That is not the God I know!"

For 3 years I listened to women's stories, literally sitting on my hands. Following the rules. Keeping silent. That morning my body no longer held my hands or my mouth or my heart.

For a volunteer at the Raleigh, NC Women's Center, the one rule that was not to be broken....our clients could talk about religion but we could not....a very necessary rule in the Southern Baptist controlled Bible belt.

Now in 1983, near the end of my practicum for my Masters in counseling, a bruised and broken woman sat across from me telling me her story. After several beatings from her husband she had finally confided in their pastor. He told her that her husband was being obedient to God and doing his Biblical duty. She should go home and be grateful.

I must have shouted louder than I thought. "That is not the God I know!" Someone walking by heard me and after 3 years I was escorted out of the Episcopal supported Women's Center.

I remember my next thought: "Why have I been silent for so long?"

Who is the God that you know?

Who is the God those in power know?

Jeremiah named the God he knew. He spoke out against the leaders, the shepherds of the people of Israel. He prophesied that a new leader would be coming who would be called the "Lord of Righteousness."

Jesus spoke out too. The writer of Colossians calls Jesus "the image of the invisible God."

Who is the God you know?

How do we let a small slice of Christianity dictate who is worthy or not. Who deserves respect? Who deserves services? Who deserves life? We cannot allow that slice of Christianity or whatever it is, speak for us all!

How can we be silent?

Who do you say the God you know is?

Today the Church calendar celebrates Christ the King Sunday or The Reign of Christ.

This Sunday is essentially the New Year's Eve of the church year.

Next Sunday is the first Sunday of Advent, the first Sunday of a new season. The first Sunday of a new year. During this week we will pause to name our Thanksgivings.

We have cycled through all the readings of our year C lectionary. We have celebrated the milestones of Jesus' life from his birth to the cross and to his resurrection. We have read through the parables and traveled with Jesus to Jerusalem. Jesus kingdom is coming and is here.

Which makes this day the New Year's Eve of the church year.

A time to pause. A time to breathe. A time to reflect .A time to give thanks.

What a year of change. A year of unbelievable reversals. A year of "I can't believe we have come to this place in our lives."

How has this year changed you? How has this year changed this community of St. Paul's?(Ressurrecion)

Where are we weaker? Where are we stronger? Where are we in the dark? Where are we in the light? Where are we clearer about who we are and what we are about?

What thoughts are coming to mind?

Take a minute to still your mind and your heart. Breath in deeply through your nose and fill spaces in your lungs you didn't know were there. Let that breath out through your mouth slowly and controlled.

Do that a few more times. In through your nose. Fill your lungs. Slowly out through your mouth.

We come to this place to let go of last week. What has been done is done. Let it be so we can begin a new week with renewed hope and vision. To remember the God we know and what is asked of us.

Just be for a moment. Here in this place. Feel what it means to you to be gathered here.

JJ sings:. ("Gather Us In" by Marty Haugen)

Here in this place new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away;
see in this space our fears and our dreamings

brought here to you in the light of this day.
 Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,
 gather us in, the blind and the lame;
 call to us now, and we shall awaken,
 we shall arise at the sound of our name.

2 We are the young, our lives are a mystery,
 we are the old who yearn for your face;
 we have been sung throughout all of history,
 called to be light to the whole human race.
 Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,
 gather us in, the proud and the strong;
 give us a heart, so meek and so lowly,
 give us the courage to enter the song.

3 Here we will take the wine and the water,
 here we will take the bread of new birth,
 here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
 call us anew to be salt for the earth.
 Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
 give us to eat the bread that is you;
 nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
 lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

4 Not in the dark of buildings confining,
 not in some heaven, light years away—
 here in this place the new light is shining,
 now is the kingdom, and now is the day.
 Gather us in and hold us forever,
 gather us in and make us your own;
 gather us in, all peoples together,
 fire of love in our flesh and our bone.
(by Marty Haugen)

Breath. Let the images of “Here in this Place” float through your being.

Is this place worthy of your stewardship, your caring for the life created here in this place?

Stewardship is like shepherding. It is about building caring, respectful, courageous, imaginative community. And that requires a space and a chief shepherd. Do you want that? Is it worthy of the fruits of your life and labor?

The truth I learn over and over is that in our lives, in our community, there is always enough when we trust that God provides.

What is asked of you is between you and God. Everyone's conversation with God is different. The important piece for our community is that each of you have that conversation.

"God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." (2Corinthians 9:8)

That passage, from 2nd Corinthians, is the theme of St. Paul's stewardship campaign.

I also commend to you as part of your stewardship praying the reading today from Colossians:

It begins "May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father; who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son." (Colossians 1:11-13)

Beloved, be of good courage, embrace hope and laughter. God be with you. Amen.

Note

Link to Spanish lyrics of "Reunenos"

[Marty Haugen の「Gather Us In」の Spanish 翻訳 | Musixmatch](#)