

Jan. 10, 2010

Sermon I Believe .... In Jesus Christ

Psalm 30 Luke 3:21-23a. 4:1-19 Philippians 2:1-11

This morning I want to share again with you some thoughts I shared with some of you 14 and a half years ago. Then, as we began our ministry together, I wanted you to know my take on two statements that are central to our faith, to what it means to be a Christian. I wanted you to know not only that I believed in Jesus Christ, and that I believed in the Church - but I wanted you to know a bit about what those two statements meant to me.

Now as my ministry with you, and our journey of faith together, comes to a close, I want to end where we began, talking about Jesus Christ, and about the Church, the living Body of Christ in the world.

This morning, if the music and Scriptures haven't been a major hint, I want to share my take on why I believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. And on February 14 I want to share some of the reasons why, in spite of the many ways the Church is flawed and broken, I believe in the Church and its message as the first and last best hope for the world.

But the story begins, my faith story, and yours too, begins, and yes, ends... with Jesus Christ... with what you and I make of him, and what he means to us  
Please Pray with Me -

Lord – we come. We come, Lord, always a little bit lonely in life, a little bit lost. Looking Lord, to make a little sense out of it all. This day, Lord, give us ears to hear your Words, spirits that sense your presence, and minds that can know Your will, and a spirit of strength to do it. May my words and the thoughts of these your loving and faithful people, be acceptable in your sight, O God, and your word to us in Christ. Amen.

How almost perfectly well the psalmist captured so much of what so many of us feel - about life and about God. That in this all too brief, all too messy life, we do give thanks and praise, for the signs we see, the presence we feel, of a living and loving God.

For every harsh and hard and heavy, even horrible thing we see in life, there is the counter balance, and more, of the star filled skies, and a new baby's soft cries, of Selfless caring and sharing, and love that not even death can end. There is light and hope.

2 Yes, the Psalmist sang of the bane, the pain, in life, but also of the blessings that finally beat out all else - as dramatic as the sunrise shatters the darkness of the night. And Muslim, Jew, and Christians, too - and anyone of any faith, could sing Psalm 30.

But that is not true of Philippians 2 - not yet. And that makes all the difference for us, and between us and those of other faiths. Not Philippians 2.... Everyone can but not every one will sing that hymn yet. And that makes all the difference.

For at the heart of it all - all of life, and all of history, is that line that says every every knee shall bend and every tongue confess - that Jesus Christ is Lord.

At heart...Who are we... we who gather here to worship week after week? We who claim membership in this Church... we who've said... at some time.. in some place... out loud... that we believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.. or... who imply we believe this by our presence here. Who are we... really?

We are ... of course... men and women. Even in a day when we seem strangely confused about sexual identity... that still is a basic description of who we are.. men and women who together reflect the image of God. We are single.. or married. Even in a day when marriage is no longer a clear term or state for some - we still are people who are mated or not mated.... Mated so that life can go on.

We are people who are young or old... and even if we cannot agree on just when old begins... and I'm hoping it is some time after retirement and hasn't been too evident before retirement.... still some of us are younger and some older.

We are God's creation, men and women, mated and not mated, young and old... who.. by being here... seem to be saying that we believe... believe in Jesus Christ, the babe of Bethlehem, man of Galilee, teacher, preacher, suffering servant, crucified and risen - Lord and Savior...

That's who we are... if we are here - Or.. to put it simply.. we are.. Christians. Disciples of, followers of, imitators of this - person Jesus.

Or... are we? Does all of what I just said seem clear in your mind and heart? Is that the reason you're up and out on a bitter cold Sunday morning...

3 In a story shared with me a long time ago, and now and again by email - it seems a little girl was confused about this Jesus person ..In Sunday School her teacher was trying to help the children understand the different names for this same person.. Jesus.

And she said to the children... In the bible we all know that Jesus has more than one name... And the little girl's hand went up... even as she shouted out her answer. Andy. Andy? her teacher asked.

Susan.. where in the Bible is Jesus called Andy. You know teacher... Andy walked with me... Andy talked with me... Andy tells me I am his own Andy the answer Susan gave was wrong... there is no such bible verse.

Andy the answer Susan gave is right... And.. if you and I can remember her answer ... about Jesus, and about who Jesus was for her... and is for us all,

Then, then Maybe we are C now most of you know a good deal about me - That I'm a Scotsman, own a kilt, but don't have the best knees for wearing it. Love golf but surely shouldn't try to putt for a living.

A husband? Yes. And a ring on a finger, and a wife in the choir that makes that clear. A father? Yes. And a grandfather – and some of you saw the proof of that two weeks ago right here.

A citizen... and some tax receipts to show for it. I am, you are, all or some of these things.... and.. we are .. something more. I am and you are...ultimately and vitally something more.. more than any or all of these other things that can be said about us.

For I am... and you are.. before all of the other things we are begin to matter... And ... after all the other things we are cease to matter.. the only thing that really matters is that I am a child of the living God. And.. I know this... and believe it...and understand it... because.. of Jesus Christ, and my faith that he is my lord and my savior.

Because I know and believe that Jesus Christ is my lord and my savior, I am here. Isn't that why you are here, too? Isn't it? That in this person Jesus, you have seen, have felt, have in your heart known... that in this crazy mind boggling often heart breaking world, there has been a sign for you... that the God of this world loves.. and cares for you. That because of Jesus, what he said and what he did.. and what happened because he lived... that because of this.. You know that nothing, nothing, nothing can finally separate you from God.. or from God's promise for you.

He redeems your life. He lifts you out of the grave. He is your light and hope now and forever. Karl Barth, the great German theologian said it simply. when asked at the end of his life what the heart of his faith was... he who had written volumes about Jesus Christ, he said... Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. And that's what Susan said... Andy ... And he walks with me. And talks with me

And he tells me I am his my own. And - isn't that the fundamental, the life changing, life directing, life guiding, life saving .. reason you are here?

Yes.. this is a lovely, lovely place to worship. Yes, we hear great music here. Thank you Bruce and Margaret and Dodie and Don and Jan and Christy and Jill - and choir members - Yes we have wonderful programs for all ages – thank you Marjorie and Scott and Joanne –and so many volunteers .... Yes this is a church with hearts and hands stretched out in sacrificial ways for mission...

Yes. You are a compassionate and caring Church.... and a Church filled with fine people who are good to have as friends... But first... and last... this Church is here... we are here.. as a people who believe.. whose lives are staked on the faith and knowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord of life.. and our savior

We are people who believe, or who are hoping or struggling to believe, that in living and dying we belong to Christ... And we are a people seeking to live more and more as Christ's people. That's who I am... who we are.

O Yes, I doubt it sometimes. And sometimes I live as though my faith didn't really matter... didn't matter as much as my life as a husband, or a father, or a worker.. or a good citizen.. matters.

Because.. Sometimes... when I look at the world around me... when I look at all the confusion and chaos of activities and values and beliefs, when I look at my own life... Sometimes I doubt what it means to be a Christian...

Or even.. whether being a Christian makes much difference at all. Do you sometimes too?

I look at the world... and its troubles...so much faithlessness, so much sin... I see the city we are a part of... its suburban energy and affluence... and its inner city decay and deep human suffering, And I wonder how it can be that Jesus Christ is the lord of such a life.... He who came for the least and the last and the lost.

And then I read the word and the words again ... and hear in my ear and heart.. the wonder of God's plan, the power of God's promise in creation, and the amazing call to us all, in Christ ... to be God's own.

And I remember - Once.. once.. how my heart was moved... my spirit warmed.. the excitement of it.. God for me .... I felt the spirit's power.. to change and guide my life... And Sometimes, sometimes.. I still do.. Do you? Do you?

In a quiet moment in nature's wonder, in prayer, in the words of hymn, in God's word - I hear the call again. And I know I've been called .... To seek to be all that I am ... a child of the living God ... called to live into the image of the perfect human being – God in Christ appearing... And I pray - Lord Jesus Christ - Be Thou My Vision...

And.. even when we do not seem to change the world... and ... church work gets a bit boring.. and we tire of helping people all the time...And.. this hour.. seems.. not special enough.. not powerful enough... to really move us any more...

I can, I have, I do ...still find comfort in my faith. I find my faith and its Teachings to be a sure and steady touch stone in my busy hectic life... a north star kind of certainty for living in a constantly changing spinning whirling world of confusion.

And I find a power for healing and for comfort in our faith, a light in darkness... And I trust anew that what the Apostle Paul saw...and said, was true and is true. That because Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior for us, his truth lives in us... and

through us... and so.. the day will come.. when every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess .. that Jesus is Lord...

Do we believe that Jesus Christ is the power of God for good in our world? Do we believe the power of our faith? Can we – who've substituted too much love for the things of the world – than a love for the source of every thing.... Can we still hear his word to us .. Can we ? Can you? And trust it?

Yes, we can look at the world ... and see so little change, so little good, so little hope. But Jesus saw the world.. sees the world....sees something now... in us, in what we do for him... try to do for him.. And he sees his power in us.. in all who seek to serve him... sees a world changing through us... through all who live and believe in him as Lord and Savior ....

Listen.. do you believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior... do you? Do you believe you are his disciple... ? Then.. you are part of what is happening in our world ...for good.

Listen... we see our church struggling to make a difference.. But.. in the world... Christianity is on the move. The Christian population of the world is growing faster than the world itself. And there are more committed Christians ... more confessing Christians today..than ever before.

In 1950 .. someone has calculated, there were, for every confessing Christian, 21 non believers... today... for every confessing Christian, there are only 7 non-believing people...

And today.. 50 plus % of all Christians live in the third world.. where Christianity is growing the fastest..

In Christ, through our faith in Christ, as Lord... and Savior, we join our lives with our creator... we become one with the power of life..., with hope, and goodness, with peace and wonder and joy.

And... in small ways.. and ways not small at all.. I know Jesus Christ has.. and is.. and will still... change lives...

Yes.. Jesus loves me.. this I know.. for the Bible tells me so.. Andy.. walks

with me... Andy tells me I am his own ...And so.. for me.. He is .. my lord and my savior... he is the heart of my hope.. for my living.. and my dying.. and for my eternal life. This I believe, more now than ever before... Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior.

Who are you... Who are you... are you Christ's person... are you.. ? Is he... is he... your Lord... and savior... Does his word guide your life... are you his disciple?.

Then... by your faith... you are part of the wonder of God's plan for the world.. Listen... Paul reminds us of the truth, of what it means for us to say we believe  
In Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior,

It means that we are, through him, in everything, everything we face in the world, in the Church, in our own lives, we are victors. Who are we? We are Christ's disciples, and he is our Lord and Savior. Listen....

"Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus... who humbled himself...therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...

Yes -I believe... in God... and ... in Jesus Christ ... his only son, our Lord...and Savior. And.. because I do... because we do... that... makes all the difference in the world.... for good.

Amen. David W. Robertson, B.D., S.T.M., D. Min.