

Sermon Notes Jun 2, 2019.

Focus Last Supper, Unity, and “kids these days”

Lectionary Readings http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearC_RCL/Easter/CEaster7_RCL.html

Three straight weeks of Jesus’ dinner conversation, and I think we get the point that the last supper is important. Today is the last of the last supper, for real. **Context** - Jesus calls for unity right before his betrayal goes into full swing. He is praying for his friends to keep the mission going, and to embody love because the mission is just beginning, not ending. Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of the Bible is called “The Message.” It gives a nice perspective on John 17. I particularly like verses 24-26 in the Message. Jesus is praying for his friends and talking about the Father.

I have made your very being known to them, who you are and what you do. And continue to make it known, so that your love for me might be in them exactly as I am in them. The church, at its best, is rooted and grounded in love trusting that the Holy Spirit is always up to something new and good. We can be always ‘rooting’ around to discover love manifest no matter where it is found.

Panning for Gold - I went to “Gold Camp” last year with my fourth grader. He was panning and panning — fingers wet and bone cold. Then he found a 0.00001 oz spec of gold and you would have thought the Warriors won the NBA finals.

What if we operate on the assumption that everyone is a gold mine of love? I think this is critical because, if we lose interest in each other’s lives, unity devolves into a hollow coexistence. Yet, there is more Eureka to be found in each other.

Fool’s Gold - There are many enemies of unity - echo chamber politics, church rivalries, and the great destroyer — youth sports board meetings. There’s also one you may not have thought about — generational smack talking. I.e. the old clicking their tongues at the foolish young.

Generational cohorts - Boomers (aged roughly 55-75) used to love to hate on Gen X (aged roughly 40-54- like me!) in the 1990’s. Gen X was “apathetic and cynical.” Gen X happily returned the favor by hating on “corporate sellout” boomers. Do you want to know what really brings together forty -year-olds and 70-year-olds now? It’s hating on Millennials (24-39).

“They are too precious and entitled toters of participation trophies...”, the tired complaint goes. We haven’t quite figured out what we hate about Gen Z yet (4-23). But with Gen Z, we vacillate between the Parkland kids who will save us all, or they’re a lost and fragile bunch of digital addicts.

This practice is just a bunch of b..... More importantly, this favorite pastime is an enemy of the unity Jesus desires in John 17. It’s an enemy of curiosity about the individuals we actually know. A whole generation of people are not perpetually cynical, any more

than a whole generation of people are perpetually entitled. It's just that the old love to hate on the young, while envying their youth. And, often youth will gladly return the insult.

The Church *can* be a place where this is not tolerated and certainly not celebrated. We don't get any help from church blogs - it's a ping pong match of Millennials chastising old-people-church-goers for being out of touch, and enlightened church boomers or X'ers offering five renewal strategies to get Millennials in the door. We don't need to blow everything up and start over. We just need to start panning for gold in each other—cultivating curiosity. The person you're looking at in front of you is not a group, she is a gold mine.

What if we reup with unity like John 17? *I have made your very being known to them— Who you are and what you do—And continue to make it known.* Based on Jesus' prayer - let's strive to *be and live* unity. This approach is attractive to those sellout boomers, jaded Gen X'ers, idealist Millennials, and more cautious Gen Z. The next time you say some version of "kids these days," please hear me nagging you to pan for gold instead.

Finally, a long winded prayer for unity throughout our life. I acknowledge, but do not include children who died early and other general catastrophes that occur far too frequently in our lives— *if you are allergic to sappy prayers please skip.*

"God, I give thanks for the wide open days of childhood, Thank you for the big people who loved me deeply and the village that made my life possible. With humility, I remember the Wild West frontier of my teens as I faced the weight of defining myself.

With joy, I remember my first victories and defeats in my twenties when I charted routes that no one else but me could be blamed for. With awe, if I was blessed by a partner and family, I got to see the world (2.0) through my partner's and children's eyes. With equal awe, I am grateful that was able to make a new family even without marriage and kids.

As an empty nester (like it or not) thank you that I had to figure the next half of life. I thank you that life did not stop at my last child's high school graduation. With amazement, I thank you that my fifties and sixties held pride of accomplishment, even if a boss younger than me did not recognize it.

God, thank you for my retirement when time and health were in abundance. If you ordained, I thank you for grandchildren who helped me experience the world 3.0. As the years grew, God, I even thank you for my weak limbs and failing eyesight, because I got to see how it not only takes a village to raise a child, but also a community to make growing old graceful. I thank you for the end of my days when I looked back and saw people younger than me flourishing without me. Because of your love I look forward to see your world 4.0 — May we all be one. May we all cheer for each other. May we know that love is everything.

Todd