

DCPC This Sunday

September 16, 2018

Sermon Summary:

Big Hearted Theology

The lectionary readings this week, (Isaiah 50:4-9a and Mark 9:2-7), respectively, introduce the nation of Israel as a “Suffering Servant” and Jesus as a Messiah who must suffer and die—something no one expected of the Messiah in the first century A.D. The late, great theologian, James H. Cone, said this about the Suffering Servant and Jesus: *“Election ... is a call to serve, to suffer with God in the divine realization of justice in the world. And Yahweh’s justice is not only for Israel but for all who hurt and inflict hurt in the world. For the oppressed, justice is the rescue from hurt; and for the oppressors it is the removal of the power to hurt others—even against their will—so that justice can be realized for all ... Second Isaiah’s description of Israel as Yahweh’s Suffering Servant influenced Jesus’ understanding of his ministry ... as presented in the ... Gospels ...”* (God of the Oppressed, p. 159). Marginalized peoples, such as African Americans, in the United States, have always found great comfort and hope in texts like these, as did the early church. But since the time of Constantine in the fourth century, when Christianity became the “state” religion of Imperial Rome, texts like these ceased to be read from the perspective of the marginalized (from below) and were now read from the perspective of the privileged and powerful (from above)—the church was now joined at the hip with the institution that was once its chief source of persecution and oppression. And, of course, much of Western history consisted of Church and State jockeying for political supremacy and power. So, how can we reaffirm and live out in our time God’s universal vision of justice for all? How can privileged people see beyond the maintenance of an unjust status quo and recognize God’s image in the marginalized and our responsibility to stop doing harm? And how can we move from a small, individualistic understanding of faith to a faith that is at least as big as the universe?

The congregation will celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism with Noah Grey Stevenson, born June 1, 2018, son of Josh and Elyse Stevenson at the 11:00 service.