

Living Out the Gospel – Tip #6

Remember that God so loved the whole world – no exceptions – that he gave his only Son.



One of the gifts we celebrate on All Saints' Sunday is the reminder of connectedness; that we are not alone; that each of us in this Great Cloud of Witnesses has a treasured place in God's heart. In the prayer of the day for All Saints' Sunday, we acknowledge that we have been knit together in "one communion"; that no person is an island; that no one is left behind. On All Saints' Sunday we also hear Jesus speak these scandalous words:

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you..."

There can be no doubt that we are living in polarizing times marked by tribalism and incivility. It no longer shocks us to hear the word "enemy" when used to describe those of differing opinions, creeds, and ideologies. If I'm honest with myself, there are times that I don't want to love my enemies and I don't want God to love the whole world; especially those with whom I stand in sharp disagreement. I want Jesus to love my tribe more than any other. In fact, there are times I become rather upset with Jesus for speaking so freely and recklessly about love. In my own bondage to sin, I want to justify the demonizing and dehumanizing of those who think and believe differently from me. I don't want to look into the eyes of the "other" and see the image of God. Yet, that is precisely what love challenges me to do.

One need not look far to see the divisions that have torn at the very fabric of our culture and I'm certain that in the weeks and months to come, there will be no shortage of divisive behaviors and actions. But in the midst of these "mean" times, do we dare believe that God's love will win the day? Do we dare challenge the false assertions that those who disagree with us are our enemies? Do we dare reach beyond the constraint of tribe to see the image of God in our neighbor? Do we dare believe that in Christ God loves the entire world, without exception?

If we are followers of the Prince of Peace, then we have no choice but to work for peace. If we are followers of the One who was poured out on the cross in love for the whole world, then we have no choice but to act in love for the whole world. If we believe that God so loved the world he gave his only son to die for it, then we have no choice but to love the world and all those who inhabit it.

Perhaps in the coming weeks and months, this is the church's calling; to be a healing voice in the wilderness, loving all without exception, especially those from different tribes and silos. If you're like me, you will need to be reminded of this ecclesial mission over and over again. Lucky for us, God sets a table each and every week where we can be reminded in a piece of bread and a sip of wine that God's love is real; that God's love is for you; that God loves the whole world, no exceptions.

Peace and Love,

Pastor Doug