

Being Beloved Community II

June 10, 2018

Since Michael Curry was elected Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in 2015, he has been calling the Episcopal Church to be a beloved community in this culture of rising hostility and cultural division.

He is calling the church to be truth tellers – fully engaging the realities of inequality and greed and violence and hopelessness. It is hard in these days of social media knowing how to “tell the truth” when everyone is broadcasting their truth for all to take or leave. I think “telling the truth” is also listening to the truth, contemplating the realities of our own lives and our culture. I believe it is being honest with ourselves and about ourselves and recognizing our complicity with materialism, racism, consumerism, and the polarization of people who think, feel, and believe differently than one another. I think telling the truth is being real and honest, with ourselves and our neighbor.

We need one another. We need cooperation and respect, community and diversity, Christian, Muslim, Jew, and atheist. I think telling the truth is accepting the truth that our kind have been given advantage and privilege while others have suffered disadvantage and discrimination. I think telling the truth is acknowledging the truth that we have not loved one another, we have not loved our neighbor, we have not practiced beloved community. But I think acknowledging the truth would also help us realize that we have experienced love from one another, we have practiced care for our neighbor, we have experienced beloved community amongst ourselves and with the city of Kokomo. Telling the truth is accepting the truth and instead of rationalizing, denying, or ignoring it, we contemplate it and let it sink deep within our bones.

He is calling the church to keep alive the dream passed along through the ages by prophets and sages and apostles and poets who put forth love not as sentiment but as a way to govern and live in this world. When love directs our actions, people don't get crushed, or abandoned, or discounted, or wounded – people matter, they belong, they are included and granted dignity. We live in a dismissive and pessimistic time. Love has long been abandoned for wealth, opportunity, fame, and power. Love considers the others as or more important than ourselves, but that is no way to win an election. That is no way to make a profit or subjugate whole people groups we deem less than ourselves. The church was born by a dream. It was Jesus' dream that we bring forth the same kingdom of love and healing and compassion that he practiced and modeled in his short life. It was Jesus' dream that we do what he did only exponentially greater. It was Jesus' dream that we care for the least amongst us, we sit in the seat that no one wants, we share the bread that was given to us, we welcome the stranger as if he was an angel. It was Jesus' dream that the church be a light in the world, a beacon that guides others along the path of peace and well-being.

He is calling us to Practice the Way – What way, you may ask? The way of Jesus. Bishop Curry is reminding us that the people who proceeded from the life of Jesus

considered themselves not as Christian, but as people of the way. The way of love as Jesus commanded them to love. The way of faith as Jesus taught them to believe and trust in his heavenly father. The way of generosity as Jesus told them to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless. The way of compassion giving preference to those who are considered the least among them. The Church was never intended to be a static or entrenched institution – it was always a movement of people becoming communities sharing with one another and sharing their community resources with their neighbors near and far.

And finally, our Presiding Bishop is calling us to repairers of the Breach. There is great brokenness in our world. We are called to be the healers, the intercessors, the salve and dressing upon the wounds of anger, bitterness, and hatred. We are called to be the place where people come and not get the same judgement, exclusion, and mistreatment they have come to expect from the Christian church. Here they are given refuge, affirmation, dignity, and appreciation. You are not less here because you are different, you are a welcome addition. You are not less here because you have failed, sinned, grown weary and disillusioned, you are in common company here. Everywhere Jesus went he was lifting the lowly, including the marginalized, raising the dead, blessing the accursed. The Church is granted the same divine power to be all that and more if we simply decide to be medicine instead of irritation.

The beloved community exists here at St. Andrew only it needs to grow, and mature, and expand. We need to contemplate what being God's beloved community in Kokomo means for us and how we can pursue and embrace our Presiding Bishop's challenge and God's divine calling upon us.

Amen