

Times Ending, Times Beginning

November 25, 2018 - Last Sunday In Pentecost

Today is the last Sunday after Pentecost. In the Christian calendar it is also the Reign of Christ, or Christ the King Sunday, which explains all the reference to King and kingdom in the scriptures this morning. It is New Year's Eve in the Christian calendar. A journey is ending, a journey is beginning.

The scriptures are filled with beginnings and endings. Journeys to unknown destinations. Changes, times rolling in, and times rolling out. I have never been one to make literal sense out of "last days" writings foretelling the great and catastrophic end to all things, but in scripture is a steady theme of all things coming to an end. And, in almost the same page or breath, scripture tells of new beginnings.

As Jesus told Nicodemus, "To enter the kingdom of God, you must be born again." To me, what Jesus is saying to Nic is, to live in the rhythm of eternal life we must accept our lives dying again and again and again, in order to be born again, and again, and again. This goes with another wisdom from Jesus, the person who allows their life to be lost for the sake of seeking god's kingdom, will gain their eternal life.

Annie and I have been moving out of the family home for the past two months. Eighteen years ago at thanksgiving, 2000, we drove 2300 miles to move into the house owned by Bob and Mary Lewis. Our boys were raised in that house, our life in Kokomo has been sheltered by that house. With each stage of clearing and cleaning out, of unsettling and resettling, a graceful death was being experienced. In fact, we called it our Swedish death move.

In Swedish culture there is what is called Swedish death cleaning where a person begins preparing for their death by releasing and clearing out much of the accumulated things they have gathered in their lifetime. At a time they seem appropriate, they begin dispensing and giving those things away. Preparing for the day they would leave with Nothing. We moved from 2800 square feet of living and storage space to 750 square feet. Much of what filled our home at S. Forest could not continue with us.

I am not a person given to the details of life, but I do seem to be able to see the broader and bigger pictures in life. To me, the story and stories told in the Jewish and Christian scriptures all tell of death being experienced with grace - and new life being received by faith. The comfort of times and things and people dying is found by the assurance and expectation of new things breaking forth, life being born again.

At the same time all these changes are taking place at home, change is happening here in our church community, some things dying some things being born and reborn, times passing away new times emerging, accepting death with grace - receiving new life with faith with unknown expectations and blessings on their way.

One night, while the house was still on the market and staged by Annie, I was there by myself, turning off all the lights after a showing. I lingered, staring out the big picture window looking out onto Sycamore and the rising moon. It was something I had done many times in the past 18 years. All the memories and life I had shared in that home enveloped me as I peered out at the moon. A beautiful time was ending - - a beautiful time was beginning. This is the way of life. It is the way of the Lord. It is the cycle we walk year after year as we conclude our year with the last Sunday in Pentecost in grace, we prepare our hearts in faith for a new journey to begin in advent.

Amen