

Newsletter Reflections for October

We begin October with a celebration where we recognize that we are a part of the universal body of Christ...at least that is what we proclaim as we celebrate World Communion Sunday. Sometimes this is observed by varying the elements present in the sanctuary or on the Table...the use of different forms or types of bread; or perhaps the incorporation of hymns from different countries...it is a time that we are called upon to remember that we are all a part of something much greater than just our local community of faith or even our own denomination. Although our place on the globe may be different; we may sing different songs, speak different languages, eat different breads as we come to the Table, we need to remember that Jesus invites each of us to come and eat with him; that the invitation is much more inclusive than we often imagine. We need to remember that no matter how different we are; we each are loved just as much by him. And we really need to remember this not just on ONE Sunday each year, or even just during the following week. It is our call to become the ONE body at all times and in all places seeking that unity in our Lord; not uniformity, but unity of purpose. There is great beauty in the wide and wonderful diversity of the world church. There is also great beauty in the wide and wonderful diversity of all of God's children, which is also something we need to remember more often in our daily lives. Holding that truth, that God created us diverse but loves us all equally, more closely and witnessing to it more faithfully would help to heal many of the wounds present in our broken world. Much of our brokenness seems to come from this desire that we have to create uniformity—to be with and among only those like us—instead of appreciating the beauty of God's diversity and unifying and accepting that diversity as we come together under our Lord's guidance. This year on World Communion Sunday our text from the Hebrew Scriptures is guidance first given to those newly released people led out of Egypt by Moses as recorded in Exodus 20. They are gathered at Mount Sinai, also known as the mountain of God where they are about to receive what are known in Hebrew as the Ten Words because in Hebrew that is what it takes to write them. We know them as the Ten Commandments; famously described as being written on two tablets. Many Christians spend more time fighting over their display in public places than they do in studying the importance of what those words as guidance for us and understanding about our Lord. If you look at the "Commandments" there is a difference in theme or topic between the first five and the last five. The first five are relational. God is establishing or re-establishing the "personal" relationship between the descendents of Abraham and God's own self. "I am the Lord your God." "You shall have no other gods before me." In telling the people not to make idols or find other things to worship, God is telling them that the relationship that they are to have with their God is to be primary. Do not take the Lord's name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, a day to rest and remember the Lord created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. All of these are about the relationship God desires to have with the people...to be close to them...to be present with them and not have other thing assume importance. The last relational commandment is to honor one's father and mother. This is also a hinge commandment as it begins the transition to those commandments about guidance about other

relationships—relationships within the community. These Ten Words were given to the people to be a framework for the nation—the people—that God wanted to form to be “a blessing to the world” in terms of the original covenant promise made with Abraham. We look upon them as regulations instead. I saw in an article that there are at least 4,000 public displays of the Ten Commandments in this country, including the Supreme Court and the Library of Congress. My questions is this, what good does it do to display them, if we do not try to live according to their framework which was the creation of a community living according to the relational outline of the God who gave them to us? We tend to focus on the ones about murder, stealing and perhaps adultery, but do we stop and consider that equal weight is given to not bearing false witness? In this day and age, do we try to hold accountable those who are bearing false witness? Are we careful ourselves about not spreading anything that we do not know is true? How about that one about coveting? How often are our actions governed by our desire to have more, to have the newest or the best? How much of what is wrong in our society can be traced to our desire for something that belongs to someone else? Some of these actions may have been in the past, but their effects in terms of scars and resentments linger in our society. How do we mend and repair those types of wrongs? Jesus said that all of the Laws could be summed up in two and he quoted Deuteronomy to do so. Briefly that summation is: Love God with all your heart, mind and soul; then love your neighbor as yourself. A careful look at the most ancient words we have from God tell us that God has always desired to be relational with that being created from the dirt of the earth...and that God has wanted all those who were told to go forth and multiply to form community and live together in community with one another giving them the guidance to do so. As we celebrate World Communion Sunday and accept the invitation to the Table, let us remember that God does not concern God’s self so much with where we display the guidance we have been given but how we follow it.

Shalom,

Pastor Libby

(If there is room include this poem and introduction.)

As I was reading commentaries for World Communion Sunday I discovered this poem by Rev. Andrew King written for the occasion in 2014.

The Ten Words (Exodus 20:1-20)

*This is a moment of new creation:
blast of a trumpet and fire and smoke
and the people gathered at the foot of a mountain,
Moses on the summit, receiving words:
words that are beacons, words that cast shadows,
words that are firesparks struck from stone,
words that are trumpet, calling to silence,
words that will echo through ages to come,*

words that are the beating heart of a covenant,
words of requirement, words that are gift,
words that are bones in the body of a people,
words that are blood flowing in their veins,

words that are power, spoken to weakness,
words that are freedom because they are fence,
words that challenge us, words that summon us,
words that are song for a life-long dance,

words that are a dwelling place, words of foundation,
words that are law, given in grace,
words that are signposts, words that are journey,
words that are a pathway pointing to peace.

*This is a moment of new creation:
blast of a trumpet and fire and smoke
and we are a people at the foot of a mountain
and we have these words, our heart for their home.*