

Reflection 7-19-2020

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The Son the Spirit and Us!

We had some really great stories this morning. In Isaiah, we heard the Lord telling his people He was the only god there is. In Romans we heard Paul define Christians as one whom the Holy Spirit dwells because they had put their trust in Jesus. Finally, in Matthew we again heard about sowing and seeds this time about good seeds and evil seeds.

I really like one of the translations I read for this week's lectionary of Paul's Letter to the Romans, it called the verses "Sonship through the Spirit" Son spelled s o n. The verses that proceed today's readings says, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds to the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds to the things of the Spirit. This is almost word-for-word how today's lessons start out. We also hear that if we live by the flesh we will die by the same; but if we live by the Spirit and put aside those things of the flesh you will live. This doesn't mean we won't die a physical death, we will.

It means we will have everlasting life if we live according to the Spirit. If we live a life according to the Spirit, we can be put to death for our sinful ways and still live with God. Being led by the Spirit we are children of God. Isn't that awesome news? We can live forever with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit!

I know that God LOVES me and you enough to let us call him Abba/ father and he gives us eternal life through the Spirit. He adopted us to be heirs to his kingdom, children of God. In ancient Rome if one was adopted, they were given all the same rights of a son born into the family. We who are Christians and have accepted the Spirit have been adopted into God's kingdom giving us the right and privilege of calling him Abba and crying out to him in prayer. Since we are also sons and daughters of God and in kinship with his son Jesus, we also share his suffering and in years to come his glory. In 2nd Corinthians, Paul says that the sufferings are "light affliction" compared to the eternal weight of glory.

Today, in the book *Holy Women Holy Men* is the celebration of four incredible women: Elizabeth Stanton, Amelia Bloomer, Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman. These women who were being led by the Spirit did amazing things in their lives. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was born into a strict Calvinist family in upstate New York. She and other women organized the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, July 19 – 20, 1848. She held the Church accountable for oppressing women by using scripture to enforce subordination of women, and she did many other things to support women and their lack of rights.

Amelia Jenks Bloomer was born in New York to a pious Presbyterian family. As a young woman she joined temperance, anti-slavery and women's rights movements. She addressed the issues of women's dress and published a newspaper called *The Lily*, picturing herself on the cover in loose-fitting Turkish trousers and began wearing them publicly. The clergy from their pulpits attacked women who wore them citing Moses' saying, "Women should not dress like men." She said to them if they wanted to follow Moses then they should all have fringes and blue ribbons on their garments. In her later years in Council Bluffs, Iowa she established churches, libraries and schoolhouses.

Isabella Sojourner Truth was born to slaves owned by a rich Dutchman also in New York. The first 28 years of her life she was a slave and sold from household to household. She fled slavery and became a street-corner evangelist after being denied the right to worship with white members of St. George's Church in Philadelphia. When she was 46, she believed she heard the Spirit telling her to go east. So, she headed to New York and Connecticut. On her way, she stopped by a Quaker farm for a drink of water and was asked her name. She said her name was Sojourner and when asked her last name she thought about all the master's name she'd had and the thought came to her that the only master she had now was God, and His name is Truth.

She became a traveling preacher, preaching at white religious meetings and campgrounds. She became part of the abolitionist movement and a women's rights speaker. It was during the women's rights convention in

Ohio where she gave the speech for which she is most remembered. "Ain't I a Woman"

Finally, Harriet Ross Tubman was born on a plantation in Maryland. She suffered beatings and injuries from her masters, she grew up to be a strong and defiant woman. To cope with these punishments, she turned to religion. Her favorite bible story was Moses leading the Israelites out of slavery. When she was 24, she escaped to Canada but couldn't forget her parents and other slaves left behind. Working with Quakers she made at least 19 trips back freeing over 300 slaves. She was guided by Spirit through omens, dreams and warnings. She foresaw the Civil War in a vision and enlisted in the Union army. She was a cook and a nurse. She led a troop of 300 black soldiers on a raid that freed 750 slaves. She joined the fight for women's rights joining forces with Elizabeth Stanton and Susan B Anthony. She also supported black women in their efforts for equal rights.

From the book of *Holy Women Holy Men* is this collect for today, "O God, whose Spirit guides us into all truth and makes us free: Strengthen and sustain us as you did your servants, Elizabeth, Amelia, Sojourner and Harriet. Give us vision and courage to stand against oppression and injustice and all works against the glorious liberty to which you call all your children; through Jesus Christ our savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."

These women show us what we can do with help of the Spirit.

Because of sin we do not "grow" in the Spirit; but with God and the Spirit we can grow into the life he has for us. Because God is our Rock, the Alpha and Omega as it said in Isaiah this morning, he loves us; all of us. God loves everyone; those who look and sound like you and me and those who don't. We have the opportunity with the help of the Spirit to overcome the things that are happening in our country right now. We can do better and help those who are oppressed by our government, by those who are angry and are lashing out.

We can with God and the Spirits help make a difference in those people who don't look like us, talk like us, believe the same as us. We can support and show them LOVE! As Bishop Curry always says, "Love is the way!"

When we choose love and act more like Jesus, we are getting closer to the kingdom of God. This is what we were made to do! I think God might be disappointed in us as a country and a people right now because we are not showing that almighty love that he showed us when he had his own son sacrificed for our sins. But there is good news even during this difficult time. There have been people who have been stepping up showing their love. Those people who have gone out of their way to help others during this pandemic. The doctors, nurses, housekeepers, first responders, grocery clerks and plain folk like you and me. How many of you have purchased a meal or bought groceries for someone who might be in need or just because you felt moved to do so? That was the Spirit working through you! God is sowing the good seeds in you doing his work here on earth preparing you to enter his kingdom through your work with the Spirit!

Because of the Spirit we can have hope. We may be saved by faith; but our hope is the return of Jesus in all His glory and when we are finally saved from our sinfulness. The last verse today says, "But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance." We can make it through the trying times that we live in because we have faith and hope with the help of the Spirit that Jesus will come again. We will be saved if we live a Christlike life as best as humans with freedom of will and choice can live. If we allow the Spirit to guide us and if we choose to listen and live that life; then we will be redeemed when Christ comes again. God did give us the freedom of choice and He also showed us how to live by sending his son Jesus to walk amongst us. We only need to go back and read his parables like the one today about the wheat and the tares. We can recognize the bad or evil things in the world. We can choose to act immediately or be patient like the farmer and wait until it's time for the harvest to see what is really good and what is bad.

I don't think this means we are to ignore those things that are blatantly bad or evil like the racism going on in our country; but to observe and make a decision with the help of the Spirit who is guiding our hearts. Remember God created us all including all things in creation and He called them "good."

Go out and do some good with the guidance of the Spirit, always having Love in your heart! May God and the Spirit protect and guide you today and every day!

Amen.