

Looking Out Our Front Door

The country group Longstar sings a wonderful song “From my front porch looking in” which tells that though they have seen many wonderful sites their favorite view is from their front door looking in, where they see “There’s a carrot top who can barely walk With a sippy cup of milk. A little blue eyed blonde with shoes on wrong 'cause she likes to dress herself. And the most beautiful girl holding both of them.”

This is great sentiment for a country song, it touches the heart and creates either gratitude for one’s own home and family or paints a picture of possibility for most. It also provides a great platform to consider what we mean when we state that “the world is our parish” and more importantly how we live as if that is so.

With acknowledge to and a prayer for whom “home” was or is not a safe place, I invite you to consider the understanding of home in light of this Longstar song. Home is where the one’s who are loved best are. Home is where we are known and can be known. Home is where we most long to be and are most ourselves when we are there.

Yet the beauty of the front door looking in can only be experienced by one who has walked through the door and lived in the home. The carrot top with the sippy cup, which is most probably spilling milk in her wake, the blonde who likes to dress herself, and we might imagine can be more than more than a little hard headed, and even the most beautiful girl who is holding them, might look very different through eyes of those other than eyes of love and family.

Love might be felt but would not be expressed by one who simply dropped by the porch and took a long look every now and then. It is in the what comes next, the opening of the door and joining together in living that family is formed.

So it is in the life of the church, universal and local, church is only church in community, church is only church as we step through the door and enter into the life. The more one gives of them self, the more one finds the beauty in themselves and others, the more one is “at home” and true to who God created them to be, the more beautiful, not please notice I said beautiful, not perfect, the church becomes and the greater their impact and gift to the church grows. This self giving and becoming is not about being in the facility every time the door is open, it is about seeking and following the God given passions of your heart and doing some of the “grunt” or house work necessary so that you and others have a supportive, encouraging, caring place to come together to turn God’s passions into our reality.

The church is a foundation for God’s transformation. Then as those who have looked in, found our sense of home and self, as those who believe that we are transformed and transforming, who have found that saving grace through Jesus the Christ which becomes so much more than just a song, as those who have begun to understand that life is best lived outside of ourselves and inside the circle of God’s love; it is the role of the church to turn us around. Some might find the phrase “turn us upside down a bit closer to their experience. We may, and how I pray to continue, that we love the view from the front porch of our church looking in. We may, and how I pray continue to, grow to be more and

more loving and excepting of ourselves and all who make up the family known at Lebanon First, and as United Methodists, and as the church universal. For it takes a great deal of love to then embrace that the view which God calls us to embrace, the porch from which Jesus lived, taught, healed and enlivened God and life for all, can be described as the view from the front porch looking out.

From the certainty and security of our place in God's family we then focus our attention, our actions, our concerns and care to all that is outside our door. We begin by choosing to notice, be choosing the see that even the walls which gives us identity and safety are walls that can separate us living as the body of Christ. This focus of attention then stirs us to walk out the door, to not only notice but to embrace, to be family with those outside as well as those inside. By the power of the Holy Spirit we learn to not only look out the door but to be explorers, to journey on in faith and know that everyone and everything we encounter is loved by God.

We find that godly difference between doing for and being with, sometimes literally yet more so in heart. We find that the giving of our selves enriches any gift, material, financial or even of our wisdom and experience, we could ever offer another. We find that in the whole of life giving and receiving are linked in a grace filled way, we come to know that it is impossible not only to out give God but also to give more that we are "able."

God ever expands our view, not taking from us that front porch looking in view, offering us even more. Not sending us out on a "mission" but inviting us to walk with Christ, to rest with Christ, to dine with Christ and to live with Christ.

The verse which today's principle is based on is one that is so familiar yet I believe we, the church, have just begun to scratch the surface of this "great commission." As an experiment in allowing ourselves to expand, I want to invite you consider, not in place of what you feel, know and hear in this passage, but in addition it to consider these familiar words with a variation of their definitions.

As some of you may expect, I've gone to the Greek, as close as humanity can come to the original, and found that along with the understanding we traditional give to the word "go" in this command, the Greek word translated as "Go not only the opposite of stop, it also may be interpreted as: to pursue the journey on which one has entered, to continue on one's journey. Teach is a Greek word that was also use to call one to "be a disciple", and Baptize, along with being a religious rite carried the meaning overwhelm.

So let's love the view from out front door looking in, yet venture often our the door and into the world, which is our parish, following Christ's call to continue on the journeys of our lives, down all the twists and turns we will go, following, modeling and equipping others to live as to be a reflection of Christ; a discipleship, and to see ourselves and the world overwhelmed in the presence and love of God.