

Reflection for October 25, 2020

Always Being Reformed

In grateful response to God's abundant love, we bear in mind our integral connection to the earth and one another; we participate in God's work of healing and mending creation. To point to the presence of the holy in the world, the church receives, consecrates, and shares visible signs of the grace of God, in company with the churches of the Reformed and Methodist traditions. Our ancestors in faith bequeath to us experiences of their faithful living; upon their lives our lives are built.

May the peace of the Lord be with you always.

Let us pray:

Eternal God, Light of the minds that know you, the joy of the hearts that love you, and the strength of the wills that serve you: grant us so to know you that we may truly love you, so to love you that we may fully serve you, whom to serve is perfect freedom. Amen.

Navigating uncertainty and disappointment is the church's (and society's!) new mission. Moses was no stranger to disappointment. After guiding his people on the arduous journey through the wilderness, facing challenges to his leadership, and fearing for his life, his reward is not being allowed to enter the Promised Land. He is, however, able to hike to the mountain top where he is given a glimpse, a vision of what God has promised.

We, too, are on the mountain top, with a vision of the Promised Land of justice and peace. How then are we to navigate uncertain times?

Jesus is asked by the religious authorities what is the greatest commandment. Out of a possible 613 commandments Jesus replies: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your

soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” The heart is where emotions, thought, and choice are centered. The soul has to do with the life breath, the force that animates a body, feelings, and consciousness. The mind emphasizes thinking and understanding. Jesus’ answer reveals that, when all 613 laws are boiled down to their essence, the remainder at the root of all of it is love, love of God and love of neighbour.

“The spiritual life is ordinary, everyday life lived in an ever-deepening and loving relationship to God and therefore to one’s true or healthy self, all people, and the whole of creation. The spiritual life—“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind”—and the moral life—“Love your neighbour as yourself”—are directly related. The spiritual life, however, is prior to the moral life, for we can love the neighbour as God loves us only if first we have experienced that love affair with God. More important, we cannot love God except in response to God’s love for us. This love affair with God is the one and only end of human life. All else is means. It was for this relationship that we were created and have our being. Because this axiom is true, nothing and no one can take away from us the meaning and purpose of our lives. Indeed, the justification for all other relationships and actions is that they enhance and enliven this relationship with God. Our faith is centered in God’s extravagant grace shown in Jesus Christ” (John Westerhoff, *The Spiritual Life*, p. 1).

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous speech, *I Have Been to the Mountaintop*, at the Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee. Like Martin Luther 500 years earlier who had proclaimed a theological treatise, Dr. King declared an economic manifesto in which he outlined his economic strategy. This pronouncement, along with his growing

opposition to the American War in Viet Nam, were the reasons he was killed the next day. “Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountaintop. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And God has allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I’m happy, tonight. I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.”

May it be so with us. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray:

Living God, by the power of your Spirit, help us so to hear your holy word that we may truly understand; that, understanding, we may believe; and believing, we may follow in faithfulness and obedience, seeking your honor and glory in all that we do; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Rev. Bill Cantelon