

Today's Scripture is a preacher's paradise. We have Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, the Restorative Psalm, A Worship experience from the book of Revelation. And Peter's reconciliation and assignment after denying Jesus three times before the crucifixion.

With this background my sermon has three points, 1. Scripture and verb forms, 2. Worship and the mystical, and 3. a new mind for ministry in daily life.

Starting with Scripture and verb forms. You may say I'm wasting our time with verb forms. I would have agreed a few years back. Bear with me and you can tell me later if you think this is a waste of time.

My 63 year Daily Office Scripture reading habit has gone through different phases. Recently I decided to do something different. I would build my own interlinear of the Gospels and some epistles. Doing this verse by verse, a Greek verse with the English verse underneath, revealed Greek verbs in a new way. Jesus often uses the present imperative. An action command to continue in the present. This Greek verb form appears four times in today's Gospel reading, unrecognized in English.

When Jesus commands Peter to "Feed" my sheep, "Tend" my lambs, "Feed" my sheep. Feed, Tend, and Feed, are all in the present imperative. The command is to act continuously in the present, feeding, tending, and feeding. Nurturing, relating, guiding, all clustering to emphasis a continuous action in the present. Love is the foundational principle for the journey, we also have the word follow in the present imperative. We are to follow continuously. Believe and follow appear in the first chapter of the Gospel in this verb form, The image for this relationship appears in the 15th chapter, I am the vine and you are the branches. We get meno, abide, He in us and we in Him. This unitive is also in our worship liturgy. Continuously.

Each Gospel will have Jesus using different present imperative verbs to emphasize some point, in this way the different Gospels become exactly alike in stressing an action as continuous. Today Peter gets his instructions. They are our instructions for our time as well. Peter is the representative disciple. We all deny Christ at some point. We all are welcomed back to the action mode in the figurative language of feeding, tending, and feeding.

Moving to Worship and the mystical, My cousin invited me to come and see the Xmas Eve Eucharist at Trinity Episcopal Church, Muscatine, in 1943. I initially had no interest. I was a 13 year old agnostic and depressed. Our family had just moved to town from the farm. I wanted to continue on the farm. I had learned to plow corn with a team of horses that summer. I was learning farm work. She persisted. I went. The worship made a lasting impression. Even though I wasn't a full participant I can still see in my minds eye the people in the pews, the brightness of the white walls, the Altar up front. It was a grail experience. I was soon invited to sing in the men and boys choir. A new life was underway where I was being fed, tended to, and fed again. The Priest who came to town a few years later became my mentor as my father became ill with a chronic depression.

Fast forward to March, 1973, in St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Bettendorf, while celebrating the Eucharist I heard a voice during the consecration prayer. "Broken is not the last word." I don't find it strange that Paul, then Saul, heard the voice of Christ on the Damascus road. I heard stories from hospital patients who experienced the intense white light, at the end of the tunnel. With one man it was in reverse. He had the white light experience during a cardiac arrest. Now before open heart surgery he was afraid if he had the white light experience again he would not want to come back. He had the surgery and he recovered. A more frequent mystical experience includes the word "yes." An affirmation.

Lest you think you have to have such an experience to be a mystic, they can be simpler, and often missed, when you experience something that is more than oneself, a transcendent moment, to feel a oneness with what is happening in a task, with others, with nature, in a quiet time, a crisis resolution, at worship, knowing this is where I needed to be. There is a range of knowing and feeling to the mystical much of which is hard to explain other than "you know." The experience moves one beyond and yet includes meaning at a deeper union with Reality.

"Broken is not the last word" was a message of hope in all kinds of pastoral situations, not by having to say the words to another, but by being present with another as the Word of hope --- The Word made flesh. The voice goes with one as strength in the present.

Reflecting on the Scripture verbs of Jesus, knowing what I have experienced while at worship, I am led to a new mind for ministry in daily

life. My life is continually under-going change. There is new every day alongside the mundane, the struggles and the pain. I know all of these. Lately they center on issues of mental illness. Some say our treatment of the mentally ill started going backwards in 1965. The book *Insane Consequences: How The Mental Health Industry fails the Mentally Ill* details the history. Improvements have begun. And one place for the renewal and ministry is the mental health court where lives are being changed.

May is also mental health month, in the Easter season, and on the 24th of May there is a graduation at the Mental Health court at the court house where those who have stabilized after two years of recovery in a therapeutic support community. My thanks to members of Trinity Cathedral for supporting the Mental Health Court.

The word repent in Greek is *meta noia*, new mind. A new mind doesn't always happen in an instant, a gradual revelation is equally true. The disciples new mind in John's Gospel begins with an invite, come and see, Come is a present imperative, your invite is continuous. And see is an aorist imperative, see in specific situations. where we see as we have never seen before. This new mind set makes all the difference. We can never go back when we live continuous with Christ. Pray for new minds in caring for others.

When Christ says do this in remembrance of me in the consecration prayer, the Do is in the present imperative. Do this Continuously.

Thanks be to God.

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