

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

The Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost: November 13, 2022

Caring for Creation with Hope

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning and welcome to Christ the Lord Church. I am so glad to be back! Thank you to everyone who went the extra step to make last week's service happen. I know that last week was Commitment Sunday, however I think today's Gospel serves us well today on that subject also.

Our Old Testament reading warns evildoers of the consequences they will face, and our Epistle seems to be a critique to those who are idle within their community. Last but not least, our Gospel reads like my morning news report: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven."

But what these readings really have in common is discipleship and commitment. We often need to remind ourselves that we are the followers of Jesus. And in so being, we understand that this world is broken and that we too will experience strife and struggle. But we can do so with a hope that is not from this world.

Bishop Marc, as he attends the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Egypt, has suggested that this Sunday be a time to remind everyone of the important ways we can each decrease our personal and corporate carbon footprint.

He does this by introducing that even the Temple mentioned here in scripture has been, before the time of Jesus, and will be, after the time of Jesus, destroyed. The temple of the body, even Jesus' will die and be destroyed. But hope and a future will live on.

I've often wondered over the last few years if climate change was really affected by human beings. Or whether the earth, like every living thing, has a time frame of aging and dying or recreating itself and I might be living within the beginning of that time. And then the year 2020 came.

The world shut down, people stopped driving, and stopped overusing and abusing everything around them. People stopped being their noisy obnoxious selves to creation and it made a difference. The animals starting coming back to areas they had left; the sky, oh the sky, during that first part of the pandemic shutdown went from gray to brilliantly clear blue. We do make a difference; we do need to take responsibility. I believe the problem is not as much a personal one as a corporate one considering the amount of energy our population uses.

And because we are followers of Jesus, we must be responsible for and to those who come after us. We must, as our Gospel reminds us, testify. And yes, people do not want to state the truth; they are also not ready to hear the truth. We as humanity are in this perilous situation together, despite any of our cultural, political, or religious differences.

"When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately." Is this a reminder to look after future generations? And as the Gospel tells us, we may suffer for the decisions we make and the testament to live in love as Christ loved us; to be stewards of creation as praise

to God. The end will not follow immediately, a reminder that what we do and how we live matters.

Bishop Marc in his letter tells us that it is often destruction that leads not to resuscitation (a bringing back to the same), but instead to resurrection - to something completely new. As last week's sermon reminded us, what comes after this life is so utterly unexplainable and unimaginable from our present human perspective, that it takes death to get there.

It also takes commitment to be a Christian, especially in a time when it is much easier to stay in your own bubble or hide behind a tribal, social or political group. But we are called to live in love, to testify, to be a people of hope even in a time of darkness.

We are called to renewal, to transformation and eventually to resurrection. This takes commitment. The kind of commitment the disciples needed to have, the kind of commitment, that was not idle, but instead knew it was sacrificing and readying for a better future.

This calls us today, as we live through yet another time of war, famine, earthquakes and the like, to be followers of Jesus. We are called to commit to doing our best to lessen our carbon footprint, and even more so when it is possible to participate in ways that inform, vote for, and eventually restructure corporate greed and the destruction of creation that results.

I am glad to say that CTL does its best to recycle and lessen our stress on the earth. I am also glad to say I believe most of us really try. This is my kudo to you, and my reminder to keep at it. And since we are talking about commitment, if coming here to church

inspires you just a little, to move more forward in your life in a more compassionate, loving, and informed way; one that is inclusive and creation focused; please consider finalizing your pledge commitment to CTL. How about inviting those you know to experience us here either in person or online? Yes, I will use that scary kind of Baptist wording, "testify", as those who have shared their moments of gratitude have done wonderfully. Let us live in hope. The church may change in many ways, but the message will always remain the same. Open hearts and open minds sharing the love of Christ, which includes interacting with the larger community. Jesus tells us, "by your endurance you will gain your souls."

I end today's sermon with Bishop Marc's reflection: "We aren't on an even playing field – love endures, love is infinite, love is divine. The loving actions of Creation Care do more to heal the earth than we can know, more than the sum of the evil that has been and is being done. With respect to climate change and Creation Care, this Gospel is inviting us to leave old ways of living behind and to learn new, healthy, holy, sustainable ways to live with all of God's family. And it is God's action, not our own, that raises us to this new life." Amen