

SERMON
“Ambassadors of Christ”
Becky A. Hebert
March 21, 2010
St. John’s Chapel UCC

Confirmands Scripture

Philippians 4: 11-13, Brady

Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Hebrews 2: 12-13, Josh

Saying, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.” And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Here am I and the children whom God has given me.”

2 Corinthians 5: 16-20

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view, even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are **ambassadors for Christ**, since God is making his appeal through us, we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Luke 19: 41-44

As he came near and saw the city he wept over it saying, “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.

SERMON

What a wondrous day this is in the life of this congregation and in the life of two families! For today two young men come before you to let you know that they wish to commit their lives to being followers of Christ and to putting their full trust in God. In essence they are saying they want to become “**ambassadors for Christ.**” The image of these two young men as ambassadors for Christ resonated so for me that I am repeating last Sunday’s Epiphany reading. If you thought you had recently hear this passage of scripture, you did just last Sunday. When I read the lectionary selection for last Sunday, I decided it was well worth repeating today. It seemed meant for today. When grouped with today’s gospel reading it seemed perfect for today.

What does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ? Well, when I think of an ambassador, I think of someone who knows how to be diplomatic. I think of someone who has recognized the things that make for peace, which involves the art of reconciliation to which Paul refers in 2 Corinthians 5 verses 18-19, right before he tells us we are to be ambassadors for Christ. Ambassadors for Christ know the art of reconciliation that makes for peace.

I was with my father when I first caught a glimpse of it. We were somewhere on the edge of the swamp when I saw him. I looked back at him as we walked away. Our eyes held for a long time. He was dressed like the other native Americans who lived in the swamp land of Louisiana, but there was something different about him. As the day drew to a close I wanted to go looking for him but my father would not let me. Later, when I was older, I went. And I asked about him. The people said, yes, they knew the man. He lived in a village about twenty miles away. So I drove there. Again I asked about him. Yes they knew the man. “He was a good man,” they said, but he was not one of them. He had lived there for awhile, but now he was

gone. They knew not where. “There was something about him,” the chief of the village said, “He was . . .”

“Different,” I said.

“Yes, he was different.”

I’d like to go on from here to tell you I found him. That he was who I thought he was. That I sat at his feet while he instructed me in the ways of truth and life. But the truth is, I never found him. I never learned if he was the One who was to come or if I should look for another. I was simply left with an enduring sense of his presence which began my first lesson in the art of reconciliation.

The Indian swamp men of Louisiana were not part of the in-group of my culture. They were outsiders—people on the fringes with whom good upstanding people did not socialize. They were a group of people as oppressed in my world as were other people of color.

When we divide ourselves up into “us” and “them,” “the insiders” and “the outsiders” conflict becomes inevitable. When we take on Christ, when we become ambassadors for Christ, we see with new eyes. We find ourselves searching in the eyes of **all** who pass our ways, especially in the eyes of those we deem different or our enemy, for the One who is to come. And we treat that person with the same dignity we hope to offer Christ when we recognize him.

Josh and Brady, this is a weighty decision you profess this day--possibly the biggest decision of your life, My hope and prayer for you is that you will not take lightly what happens here today and next Sunday. You are saying you wish to become ambassador of Christ, agents of reconciliation. In essence you are saying today that you will work hard to not miss the time of your visitation from God—which is the thing that makes for peace!

Whether Christ is to literally come again or not—it is of extreme importance that we never stop looking. For in the looking the barriers between “them” and “us” come down until there is no “inside” and “outside” group – but we are all one in Christ.