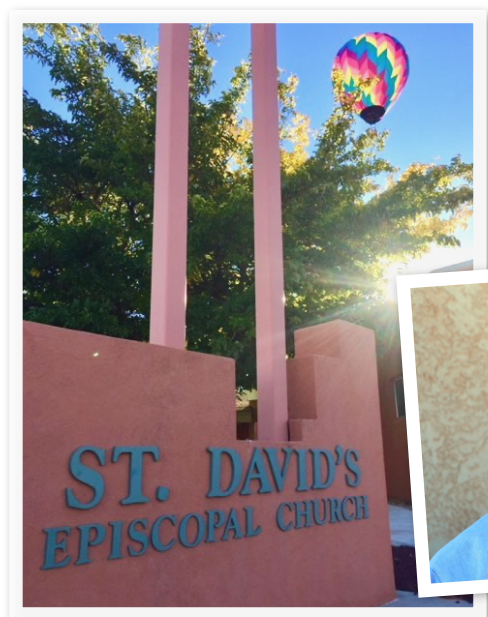


A Message from the Priest ~ June 25, 2023



JOHN 20:19-23

PROPER 7 6-25-23

*May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight,
O God, our strength, and our salvation.*

Today's gospel picks up where you left off last week. Jesus is preparing the twelve disciples for their venture into the world. It is his way to prepare them with little sayings that tend to sound like a string of proverbs. These sayings also teach us some of how to be disciples.

“A disciple is not above his teacher, (because the meaning of disciple is akin to student, one who is learning), nor a slave above his master; . . . If they have called the master of the household Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!” Because Jesus taught something different from the standard party line, he was maligned by the religious leaders of the day. We know that when we do not uphold to the popular religious line today, we also are maligned by those who think they know better.

This is where the sword comes in, the sword is not in our hands but in the hands of those who need to defend the status quo. Although the statement, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword,” sounds like it is counter to what we hear at other points in the gospels, I think both can be true. Jesus brings us the peace of God, a peace that finds a home in the soul, yet when we follow the way of Jesus, we can find ourselves confronted by a sword, whether figuratively or literally.

This warning does not come without promises. Every hair on your head is counted; every sparrow is known, and you are more valuable than many sparrows, so be not afraid. The final promise in this passage is that those who lose their life as disciples, will actually find it, which I take to mean living as one with Jesus, in God, as both Paul and John speak of elsewhere.

What can we do today to live as disciples? We can name the lives that matter, individually, not just tossing all people into one pot. We can acknowledge that black and brown lives have been discounted for generations and must be held up as among the voiceless for whom we must speak. Now, we must also hold LGBTQ+ people, especially transexual people who are being attacked in myriad ways by states, egged on by far-right, so-called Christian groups.

All people are blessed, and all are a blessing to creation, because we are all created in the image of God. This means that God is, as the children's song goes, red and yellow, black and white; and God is straight, gay, transgender, and everything in between. All of these acknowledgements are unpopular in many circles; however, it is the message of God's love that we are to spread. To be maligned because of these beliefs and the accompanying actions is an honor according to Jesus.

Amen.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathalin +". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rev. Kathalin Walker