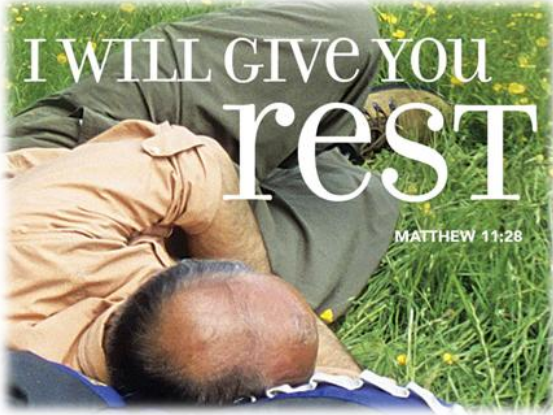


SUNDAY, JULY 5, 2020
PENTECOST 5
GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
SOMERS POINT, NJ 08244
INTERIM PASTOR: REV. KEVIN HILGENDORF



“Christ take all our burdens!”

Let us pray: Grant, O Lord, that what I say with my lips I may believe in my heart and practice... Someone said if you feel praying is a waste of time - do it anyway! How long does it take? As long as it takes! Lord, I confess, I am not what I ought to be, but I thank you Lord that I'm not what I used to be.

Eugene H. Peterson in the "THE MESSAGE // REMIX: The Bible in Contemporary Language" translates verses 24-25 of Paul's dilemma, "I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. Christ acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different."

I shared this prayer with you before on Ash Wednesday. As I read this, keep in mind Eugene's translation..."Christ acted to set things right in this life of contradictions."

"I asked God for strength, that I might achieve...

I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for health that I might do great things...

I was given infirmity that I might do better things.

I asked for riches, that I might be happy...

I was given poverty, that I might be wise.

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men...

I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life...

I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I asked for...

But everything that I hoped for.

Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered...

I am among all men most richly blessed. Amen (Found in the clothing of an unknown dead Civil War soldier).

C. S. Lewis states, "The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become." The Psalmist declares, "You, Lord, are faithful in all your words, and loving in all your works. The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up those who are bowed down. Prophet Zechariah's words directs us, "Return to your stronghold, O Prisoners of hope." Again, Eugene reminds us, "according to the Psalms; the primary use of prayer is not for expressing ourselves, but for becoming ourselves - we cannot do that alone."

"Christ acted to set things right in this life of contradictions." I remember a pericope study at Paul's Run on Bustleton Avenue in Philadelphia where Pastor Howard Khunle over 90 years was sitting next to Marilyn (a pastor 's wife). She had an unopened bag of chocolates which she planned to give to a resident following our study. Pastor Howard asked politely for some chocolates. Marilyn explained what she was going to do with them. Again, pastor asked for some chocolates and again she explained. Later pastor asked again and she turned to me saying, "what shall I do?" and I think I would have said, "Share" but I didn't. I responded, "Do what your heart tells you to do." She opened the bag and Pastor Howard smiled. For where your treasure is there your heart will also be. "Christ acted to set things right in this life of contradictions."

Now the peace which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.