

5 Pentecost C; June 27, 2010
Grace and Glory Lutheran Church; Pastor Ken Albright
Text: Luke 9: 51-62
Theme: The First Fruit of the Spirit: Love

On vacation this past week, there was one warm evening when I sat out on the deck at the South Beach Marina in Hilton Head. There was a man there. Looked like a heavier, tanner Tom Hanks. He was the evening entertainer. He stood on a deck platform strumming his twelve string guitar and sang everything from James Taylor to Jimmy Buffett. And people listened, and ate their seafood and drank their cocktails as he played.

But what impressed me most, was not the entertainer himself, but this little blonde haired six year- old boy who sat just two feet in front of him. He was mesmerized. From one song change to another, he watched every move the musician made. Soaked in every sentence of the lyrics. Seemed to be so caught up in the music making man in front of him, that his family could have settled their bill and walked off without him. He was THAT absorbed by the wonder of this man and his music.

And I thought to myself, that boy is going to do something with music. That boy, this night, has been converted to guitar. He has forgotten everything else in the world, and is absorbed in this man and his music.

I think that must have been the kind of devotion Jesus had to his Heavenly Father. I wonder if that was the kind of fix he had on his father, a focus that tuned out the distractions and focused intently on the breathtaking score God was designing for the world.

It says in Luke 9 that Jesus had “set his face” on Jerusalem. Other people rejected him, but it didn’t matter to Jesus. Didn’t distract him. He was so intent, so focused on what God had in store for him, that everything else, everything, was secondary to that.

In Paul’s letter to the Galatian Christians, he is encouraging them not to be distracted by the ways of the world. Not to get sidelined in all the things the world tosses to us like trinkets. Not to get settled in to impurities and back biting and all sorts of nonsense.

But to let the Spirit, which was given to them in baptism—rule their relationships. Let the Spirit fix their gaze on the one who IS most important. Let the Spirit rule in their hearts so that they are not so much concerned about what they have been freed from. As they are concerned about what God has freed them up to do for neighbor.

Listen to what Luther says in his writing “The Freedom of A Christian”:

Here is the truly Christian life, here is faith really working by love, when a man applies himself with joy and love to the works of that freest servitude in which he serves others voluntarily and for nought, himself abundantly satisfied in the fullness and riches of his own faith. . . .

Is that the kind of faith that led Harriet Tubman to do what she did for others? When we think of freedom, we generally think of being freed from something—not for something.

Harriet Tubman said of her experience of escaping slavery:

I had crossed the line. I was free; but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a strange land.

Perhaps that lack of a welcome is what drove her to bring others to freedom. Harriet Tubman did not simply revel in the fact that she was free. She was compelled to serve others. She returned thirteen times under dangerous and deadly conditions and helped rescue over seventy others from slavery.

You and I are free. We are free in Christ.
Free from the power of sin.
Free to live a new life.
Free to live without fear of those who can kill the body.
Free to live with our face set on what Jesus is doing in this world.

So, if we are free. What then are we to do?

How shall we put our hand to the plow?
What is it that Jesus is calling you to do with your freedom?
Who are you being called to liberate?

To what is your gaze becoming more and more fixed?
To what great need is Jesus looking at you and saying:
“Will you come and follow me?”

Love is the first of the fruits of the Spirit.
Thrown in there with all the rest like a fruit bowl, though it could suffice all on its own.

It is where the Christian life begins and ends—in our living fully into the love God has given us.
In our finding the discipline, like that little six year old boy—to find ourselves so lost in wonder, in the sheer magnificence of Jesus and the tune he is writing on our hearts that

we cannot look back. Only forward. Loving. Serving. Bearing fruit from this day forward.

In Jesus' name.
Amen.