

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"Justice, Peace, and Love" 3/23/22

And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Hosea 6:8)

In life we are to stay focused. When the cattle drivers cross the river, they keep their eyes focused on the place on the other shore to which they plan to drive the cattle. They can't be side tracked, no matter how rough the current, they have to stay focused on their destination. So it is with us on our journey. But on what do we focus? How are we to live?

Many wonder what is a Christian? What is different about their faith? How does a Christian show they follow Christ? Good question. What does God say about how we are to live? Well, God puts it out there in simple words. God says it succinctly.

Besides the words of Hosea, we read from Isaiah, "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow." (Isa 1:17)

Zechariah tells us, "This is what the LORD Almighty said, 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.'" (Zechariah 7:9)

James puts it this way, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, 'To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.'" (Jms 1:27)

Simple, maybe not easy, but simple. In our baptism we pledged to strive for justice and peace on earth. Not to be sidetracked by how unfair life is, but to hold fast to the model Jesus left for us. No matter how rough the current, we are to think on that which is honorable, just, pure, pleasing and commendable. This is how we rise above the injustice. This is how we right the wrong – by keeping our eyes on the destination.

People may bully us, others, the weak, and those they don't care for. People lash out. We feel shorted in our lives. People, unfortunately, do not treat others with justice. How, then, are we to react and beat them at their game? By showing justice and doing goodness. It's like heaping hot coals on their heads. I love that verse, even if it sounds like revenge. It's not really done as revenge. Jesus' actions, His teachings were counter cultural. People couldn't understand. But this was His character and is to be ours. Our reactions to difficult acts and times show who we are and whose we are.

Jesus, Himself, the Son of God, faced injustice. He was wrongfully accused, betrayed, abandoned; unfairly judged and condemned to die as a criminal. Oh, how He understands our tumultuous trials. And His message to us is the same as it was in the beginning, "Love one another." Simple. Succinct. Not always easy, but always the right action. Right for us. It gives us peace. Right for the situation. It diverts fisty cuffs, bad feelings, lost friendships.

God's love for us is breathtaking. We are in awe of God's compassion and unfailing forgiveness. We can choose to be kind. To listen. To see things from another point of view. We can turn the other cheek. Walk away from the fight. Forgive and choose to love.

Please pray with me:

Forgiving God, we turn to You for the strength, the resolve, the fortitude to live as You have commanded. Help us to step back, to count to 10. Help us to forgive, accept, and love. May our choices lead to justice, reflect Your love. We pray for our nation and the nations of the world. May the desire to strive for justice become the cry of our leaders. Loving Lord, let there be peace. **Amen.**

Blessings on your Lenten journey.