

Year A, October 29, 2017
21 Pentecost (Proper 25)
Christ Church, Mexia

My neighbor knocked on my door at 2:30 a.m. this morning. Can you believe that? 2:30 a.m.! Luckily for him I was still up playing my bagpipes. - Neighbors! Gee, whiz!

Again, the gospel reading reports the Pharisees trying to entrap Jesus – they’ve even got a lawyer doing it now. But he is no match for God’s son. And then Jesus asks them a question, and if they had been able to come up with the right answer, it could have changed their lives. They would have realized who he was and what he could offer them. But let’s start at the beginning.

Love God with all your heart, soul and mind and love your neighbor as yourself. Really? My neighbor? All of them? So easy in theory, so difficult in practice! But let’s not overlook the first part, because if we loved God in the way that is specified in Jesus’ answer – with all our heart, soul and mind, then the second part wouldn’t be nearly as difficult. To do so, however, requires an incredible amount of trust and focus and letting go of things like control, ego, ideas about the way life “should be,” and several other things. Therein lies the rub.

So, let me share with you a story from *Holy Sweat* by Tim Hansel:

At first, I saw God as my observer, my judge, keeping track of the things I did wrong, so as to know whether I merited heaven or hell when I die. He was out there – sort of like a (boss).

But later on, when I met Christ, it seemed as though life was more like a bike ride, but it was a tandem bike, and I noticed that Christ was in the back helping me pedal.

I don’t know just when it was that He suggested we change places, but life has not been the same since. When I had control, I knew the way. It was rather boring, but predictable ... It was the shortest distance between two points.

But when (Jesus) took the lead, He knew delightful long cuts, up mountains, and through rocky places at breakneck

speeds, it was all I could do to hang on! Even though it looked like madness, He said, 'Pedal!'

I worried and was anxious and asked, 'where are you taking me?' He laughed and didn't answer, and I started to learn to trust.

I forgot my boring life and entered into the adventure. And when I'd say, 'I'm scared,' He'd lean back and touch my hand.

He took me to people with gifts that I needed, gifts of healing, acceptance and joy. They gave me gifts to take on my journey, my Lord's and mine.

And we were off again. He said, 'Give the gifts away; they're extra baggage, too much weight.' So I did, to the people we met, and I found that in giving I received, and still our burden was light.

I did not trust Him, at first, in control of my life. I thought He'd wreck it; but He knows bike secrets, knows how to make it bend to take sharp corners, knows how to jump to clear high rocks, knows how to fly to shorten scary passages.

And I am learning to shut up and pedal in the strangest places, and I'm beginning to enjoy the view and the cool breeze on my face with my delightful constant companion, Jesus Christ.

And when I'm sure I just can't do anymore, (Jesus) just smiles and says, 'Pedal.'" Doesn't that sound like a wonderful and joyful way to live?

Now, while that is sinking in, "Imagine yourself going down the road of life, and you come to a vital crossroads. Standing there at the crossroads are the following three figures: A pastor who never finishes his sermon until late Saturday night, a pastor who always has his sermon finished and polished by Thursday noon, and the Easter Bunny. Which of these three would you ask for directions? – The answer is: The pastor who never finishes his sermon until late Saturday night. The other two are both figments of your imagination." (Hodgin, 854) Just wanted to see if you were listening...

Maybe we don't always listen to Jesus, or any of the Trinity for that matter, because we're not sure that God is real, not just a figment of our imagination. But Jesus, and the others of the Trinity are real. Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit talk with everyone, but very few people realize that, value that, or act on what they say. We have not learned to trust God, to focus on God. How many people do you think there are in this world who would follow the advice of a fortune cookie rather than the advice of Jesus? – the advice of a used car salesman rather than Jesus? Too many, I fear.

And so, we become like the little boy who was afraid of the dark. "One night his mother told him to go out onto the back porch and bring her the broom. The little boy turned to his mother and said, "Mamma, I don't want to go out there. It's dark.' The mother smiled reassuringly at her son. 'You don't have to be afraid of the dark (-) Jesus is out there. He'll look after you and protect you.' The little boy looked at his mother real hard and asked, 'Are you sure he's out there?' 'Yes, I'm sure. He is everywhere, and he is always ready to help you when you need him,' she said. The little boy thought about that for a minute, then went to the back door and cracked it a little. Peering into the darkness, he called, 'Jesus? If you're out there, would you please hand me the broom?" (Hodgin, 413) But it doesn't work that way, Jesus shows us the way, stands beside us and helps us, but we have to take the journey. We have to do what Jesus wants us to do, because he isn't here now in human form and he needs us to do what needs to be done. There is a job for every one of us, but we have to listen. We have to accept the call.

I know how difficult that is. Believe me. I've been there, and it wasn't that difficult to come up with lots of reasons why I couldn't - shouldn't, or to just ignore that still, small voice. After all, the noise of life drowns it out easily – if we let it. But I can tell you unequivocally, that if you relinquish your control, let Jesus lead you – take the front seat, you will be much happier. You won't have a charmed or perfect life in which bad things don't happen. But you'll be able to deal with it/them better, and you'll find that many of the things that bother you now, won't bother you so much then.

But you've got to put God first, and trust – have faith. It isn't easy, not easy at all, but it is the way to true happiness. I believe that with all my heart, soul; and mind – because I have been fortunate to have experienced it in my life.

In the name of the One God - the Creator, the Word, and the Spirit.

Amen.