

UNLIKELY AMBASSADORS

May 27, 2018 *Holy Trinity – B*

Isaiah 6:1-8; John 3:1-17

Jason Seaman, a middle school science teacher at Noblesville, IN, put all concern about himself aside as he hurled a basketball at a student who was armed with two handguns and firing into the classroom. He was buying precious seconds by distracting the shooter, and finally went after the boy, getting shot in the abdomen, hip, and forearm, as a result. Students who had been in “active shooter drills,” reported that he once said he would throw himself on top of a gunman rather than risk losing one of his students.

That anyone going into the field of education has to conduct active shooter drills is something they didn’t sign up for; yet, in the course of doing what they do, teachers and administrators everywhere demonstrate that, in spite of long hours and not-so-great pay, there is nothing they won’t do for the welfare of the children entrusted to their care. Like Mr. Seaman, they become unlikely heroes for their courage to do what it takes to get the job done.

This is Memorial Day weekend, and the holiday we observe Monday is, in fact, dedicated to those who did what it took, even to the point of giving their lives, in order to get the job done. In their devotion to this nation, they gave all.

In a passage well-beyond today’s reading from John’s gospel our Lord proclaims: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” [John 15:13] Jesus speaks these words with insight: He is the embodiment of the love God has shown—the love that spares nothing in order to get God’s job done. He knows that love means committing himself completely to the world: God’s creation and the object of God’s love.

The gospel reading speaks of God’s love that spares nothing for the people God loves. Within this passage are the words of John 3:16, the best-known verse of Scripture, and verse 17, sometimes called one of the most-neglected verses. [¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.]

Our readings for this Sunday of the Holy Trinity are more about love than they are about a doctrine of the church. While creeds attempt to explain the relationship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and preachers commit heresies trying to dissect the Trinity, perhaps the best we can do is to read from Scripture that which it is meant to do—which is not so much about creating systematic theology professors as it is about sending ambassadors of the Triune God to speak words of acceptance and love in his/her name.

I found great comfort in today’s reading from Isaiah which paints an incredible picture for us in Isaiah’s vision in order to show how God’s message, above all else, is to *Go and Tell*. Isaiah sees himself as unworthy, and certainly unlikely, for such a calling. “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” Of course, God has a way of saying “I can fix that” to Isaiah: The six-winged Seraph touches a hot coal to Isaiah’s lips, in this vision, and Isaiah is made purified by its fire.

At some point, everyone going into the ministry has uttered an equivalent protest, yet God has insisted on using us, in spite of ourselves and our perceived drawbacks.

Like Isaiah and a whole host of prophets, I am, by my own reckoning, an unworthy ambassador for God; yet God still has a plan for me. Just as God the Father knew he could anoint prophets, and Jesus the Son called together an unlikely bunch of learners (disciples) to become people who are sent (apostles), we speak today of the gifts of the Spirit embodied in every believer, everyone who is called to *be church* to the world. And, to borrow the language of Martin Luther, that same Spirit “has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy, and kept me in true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith.” [*Small Catechism*, Explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed (On Being Made Holy)]

While Trinity Sunday has been called the one festival of the church that is predicated on doctrine, it is really about knitting together the strands; so in every aspect of God’s revelation to the world, we see God’s love. Why? Because the message is our inheritance so that we may reflect the love we have received. The Triune God—who, *by definition through Father, Son, and Spirit*, is a God of relationship—calls, gathers, enlightens and makes holy each of us, as emissaries of the Good News: God loves you! Jesus came to this earth, lived and died for you! The Spirit is God’s promise to always be there, for you!

Because there is no place God will not go, God will find—even in the unlikely places and people—that which he will make holy: to be the next ambassadors of God’s amazing love. Amen.