“Dedication”

Christ the King; Stewardship Dedication; Thanksgiving

Psalm 100  Kimby Young

I Corinthians 12:4-7  November 20, 2016

Mark 10:28-31

When I say the word “dedication” what comes to mind? Dedication. The word can lead you in a few different ways – and several of those have been a part of today’s service.

Dedication can mean - the setting apart of something for a particular purpose, or in church terms, offering up something to God for sacred use – as in we dedicate the mittens and the Operation Christmas Child boxes and our Thank offering donations today. We think about where these gifts are going, how they will be used, and we ask God’s blessing that they will bring some goodness into the world, share God’s love in some concrete way. The word “dedication” can also be used of a building or an object. Sometimes a person can be dedicated or consecrated in a special ceremony or service – like our dedication of elders and deacons today – to mark their service in and for this community, to recognize their commitment, and to promise to support them in their ministry here at church. This reminds us that the word “dedication” can also be a descriptive term. It speaks of loyalty, devotion, commitment, intention and honor. People have dedication to a cause, a job, a relationship, another person, or a purpose. If I say she is a dedicated musician – you know that means she works hard and offers her best. If I say he is a dedicated church member – you know that means he is faithful in his attendance and service. Dedication is about a person’s commitment; “giving of yourself.”

So today as we dedicate our Stewardship pledge offerings these various meanings of the word “dedication” all come into play. We are setting aside specific objects – our pledge cards for a purpose. The cards are symbols of a part of ourselves – our time, our talent, our prayer, our property. The cards are reminders of promises we make to dedicate gifts to be used for God’s service. To go one step more – the cards and the promises on these cards are actually reminders that we dedicate ourselves to God, to be used by God to share love in the world.

We dedicate ourselves again, as we offer these pledges and promises. We show our dedication – our personal commitment – in these dedications of objects.

Dedication is about offering your best and knowing that God will not only use whatever you are able to give, God will bless it and make it even greater. God takes our dedication, and creates miracles of grace and goodness.

The reading from the gospel of Mark is about that kind of dedication. You shall love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. This is a reshaping of the Old Testament commandment from Deuteronomy 5 which is central to both the Jewish and Christian traditions. God calls us to absolute commitment – absolute devotion. We are called to love God with everything that we are and everything that we have – heart, soul, mind and strength. And we are called to show that love through our interactions with others – in loving our neighbors in concrete demonstrative transformative action. We are called to complete dedication to God – belonging to God. This dedication grows out of that belonging. It grows out of the knowledge that God loves us and sustains us and gives us everything we ever need. God provides for us and cares for us. Our dedication evolves out of our experience of that belonging to God, that provision by God, that love of God. Dedication to God is about gratitude to God in response to God’s love.

Today is Christ the King Sunday. That is annually – the last Sunday of the Christian calendar. It usually falls right before Thanksgiving or on the Sunday after Thanksgiving. It is appropriate that Thanksgiving and Christ the King Sunday are so intimately connected. Our gratitude to God is because Jesus Christ is Lord, because Jesus in that Lordship saved us from sin, despair, destruction and death. Jesus pulled us out of darkness so we belong to Christ. Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior.

Christ the King Sunday is when we remember that Jesus Christ alone is the Lord of our lives, the center of our choices, and the One to whom we owe all our praise. We remember that God provides everything we need, even salvation through Jesus Christ. And we think about what that salvation means for our daily living. What does it mean that we are saved? What does it mean that we belong to God? What does it mean that Jesus is King – ruler, sovereign, guardian and guide? What does it mean that Jesus Christ is Lord of your life? - the only Lord of our lives!

It means that all that we are, and all that we have, everything that happens and everything that we are able to accomplish – is because of God – because of God’s love in Jesus Christ. As you make your list of blessings this week – as we move into Thanksgiving and beyond - remember that – remember everything is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord. We belong to God. We are loved by God. We are children of God. We are chosen in God. And whatever you do, whatever you give, wherever you go and however you touch the lives of others, you are able through Jesus Christ our Lord. Give thanks for the Lord is good! Give thanks for you are empowered to love! Give thanks for you are blessed beyond measure! Give thanks! Give thanks! Give. Thanks.