

Pastor Roy's Sermon from July 20, 2014

Will my life's work be judged as meaningful and good? Do I have good friends? Am I a good friend? Will the future hold promise for today's children? Are our ministries effective? Are we making a difference? Have we experienced the life changing hope of resurrection? How do we know the answers to any of these questions? Yet we seek true judgment. We try, but we cannot render a final judgment for anything. As the saying goes, the jury is still out.

The apostle Paul is never content to say, "Well we cannot know for sure, so there's no sense in trying to make good decisions." Instead, he compares the brokenness of compulsive, destructive behavior versus life lived in resurrection hope. The resurrection is trusting in life and mercy--the wisdom of creation flowing in the work of the creator.

We tend to get caught up in all we need to do and how it all depends on us. . .and we miss this wisdom of mercy life. By nature we focus on our ability to do what we think needs to be done. . .whatever it takes to get it done and because we cannot make perfect judgments, we end up focusing on the wrong things or we make poor judgments. This is true personally, as a community, and as a nation. Thus, our priorities do not accomplish healing and wholeness but lead to some having plenty, and some wanting; we have wars, famines, refugees, and genocide. There is nothing new about any of this—just new examples. We have child refugees spilling across the borders because of violence and despair, things upon which children should not have cut their teeth. This week we have a violent Israeli incursion into the Gaza strip to reduce mortar attacks, the downing of a Malaysian airliner accidentally mistaken for a Ukrainian fighter jet, plus countless atrocities fueled by poverty and limited resources. We as human beings have this tendency to trust our fears rather than mercy. Fear and hatred motivate. Faith is a quiet voice which whispers truth and mercy. Those who have good ears may hear. The suffering drives us to act, for Jesus is always on the side of the suffering. If we cause others to suffer, than whether we like it or not, we are standing against Jesus.

There is a lot of groaning in our passage from Romans. Humanity groans wherever we look with this always present suffering. We try to plan for the future, to avoid suffering and pain. In all of this taking care of ourselves, we still worry and fret and, at times, are miserable. In a sense, we are groaning specialists. The beauty and wondrous interconnections of everything in creation are often lost to our view. Do the birds groan, or deer, trees, weeds, rocks, sun, moon, and stars? Not like we do.

In the groaning he observes, Paul yearns for the consummation of the best and most beautiful elements of creation. He is waiting for a fine tuning which is both coming and already present. This is the mercy and goodness of God brought together in the unity of Christ. This salvation working itself out in God's mercy, held by God, not subject to us--this is a holy reality. Here is resurrection life and it exists already. Yet because we are slow to receive it, it is a unity which is still coming.

We talk about this healing unity as adoption, redemption, creativity, and abundant gifts. This is our faith. This is our hope. *A faithful reality revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our sign is the cross which exacted its toll, but could not have the final word. The final word is resurrection.* Resurrection is not something we can wrap our minds around. We cannot grasp the height and depth and breadth of resurrection. We see glimpses, and these glimpses lead us to trust in mercy and love. Resurrection is learning to trust in a present and future in God's company and the company of the faithful.

In all the groaning of humanity, Jesus' parable today reminds us to hold back on making final judgments. Leave the judging for God whose wisdom, and very, very broad perspective judges well in and for mercy. We clearly cannot judge well. We go with our limited experience and understanding, our bias, our preferences. We make our decisions based on the evidence before us and usually that evidence is very limited. Sometimes decisions both personal, national, and global defy logic. Sometimes we must muddle our way through. How does one judge a muddling decision? Politicians pretend that we live in a black and

white world. Or maybe it's we who want our politicians to just make it all better and when they cannot, we lose hope and blame them because we are failing to understand Jesus' parables.

Paul tells us to learn and trust with resurrection faith.

Jesus's parable of the weeds reminds us as we make judgments we must hold them with humility, not to condemn in an effort to boost our sagging egos. Since we don't have the final judgment, we must leave room for disagreement. And we will not be able to eliminate all the problems and all the groaning.

Resurrection faith is what we do surrounded by problems and groaning. Resurrection faith is not the thing which eliminates the problems and groaning.

Last week's parable of soils reminds us that our job in the difficulties of life is to cast forth the seeds of mercy without expectation of results. Freely we have received, freely we give.

Herein is freedom, mercy, and life. Resurrection life not based on our actions, but on the final, enduring mercy of the creator who redeems and sustains this life with such human groaning. Thanks be to God for this final hope which is coming to pass among us today. Amen.