

Well Chosen Words

Presented by Pastor Scott Walters on 09/06/20
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Waunakee, WI

Call it the “pandemic blues, I suppose. While I see a number of you on Zoom meetings during the course of a week and even a few of you live here at church, this is a completely different experience: to continue ministry and at the same time, for the sake of the safety of those I serve, have as little contact as possible....

One begins to ask philosophical questions: Does what I do matter? Is this human institution wrapped around the story of faith, filled with human foibles and frailties now for nearly two millennium. Does it matter?

I began to think about my experience as a very young preacher while I was in college.

[Serving as supply preacher at the small Milladore UMC.] Did my offering worship matter for the small meager group gathered on those Sunday mornings?

It mattered. The Gospel was preached. The Resurrection hope was offered. However well or poorly I did in the execution of that wasn't the point.

We know in our lives and in our living that it matters. It is the glimmer of mattering that brings us to click on to Crossroads' Facebook page to brought us here today, when there were other choices. And we know it matters as well because we sense in our bones that “the story” carries truth. [“The Epic Story”]

According to Matthew, Jesus has been doing big things. He has stilled the water, he has multiplied food, he has cast out demons. It is clear that his audience, the disciples, never totally get it.

Today, however is a time for teaching. And today Jesus offers a kind of rambling ethics lesson, made real in the flesh and blood of the one who taught it. If you become like little children, you will understand what heaven is like, he says. I will die, he tells them, and you will need to die as well in order to live truly. Take up your cross.

And then this. If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. For our cynical, gossipy, tabloid, talk show world, which lives for confrontation rather than reconciliation, how refreshing, how faithful, to work out differences with that someone, honestly.

It is ethics on the most personal level. But it is also ethics on the most public level. -- for business, for politics, for families, for relationships.

That is to say, faith is never simply between God and us. How we relate with one another matters, and it matters deeply, and so on this Labor Day weekend, when work and politics and family are in the air, might we not ponder a moment about the truthfulness of these words.

Jesus seems to be saying that our relationship with him to God is made real in the ways we relate with each other and with the world. Remember that. How we live in community is a reflection of our relationship with God, the call by Jesus to each one of us to be the church, the body.

Parker Palmer who lives in Madison, Wisconsin writes that “The church has been called to live as a gathered community of people who celebrate and support, challenge and resist, forgive and heal...when people look upon the church, it is not of first importance that they be instructed by our theology or altered by our ethics but that they be moved by the quality of our life together.”

He says, it is not about a number, whether two or three or 12 or 4300, but about the power of the one who gathers us. The power of what can happen when we gather in that Presenc – gathering either in person or online..

Well Chosen Words

+The presence of love--

+The presence of love as Abby gathers the children of Kids for Christ and offers an lesson and Christ's love.

+The presence of love as a tutor and helpers at Frank Allis School with children who not only desperately need a good education, but also love and respect. And the Waunakee Neighborhood Connection and the Waunakee Food Pantry.

+The presence of love as a group of youth gather in the kitchen to prepare a nights meal for Porchlight.

+The presence of love as two or three gather in a hospital room with a loved one, and the prayer is one of hope, and even as voices tremble, that tender power is surely present in the room as well.

Whether we are able to physically gather or not, right now, it matters. Here and there. And we gather in our little groups of two or three.

If you gather, in two and threes, modestly, hopefully, Jesus tells us, what is done here on earth will be hallowed in heaven.

That is not a guarantee. It is a promise. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." That is our hope. That is why this matters. The power of gathering.

With the one who teaches us, who heals us, who knows us, who loves us, who dies for us, who lives for us. The one who is there among us, so that, we may be there for the world loved so deeply by him, in simple twos and threes, as heaven's loveliest reflection.

Is that too idealistic? Am I "a sucker?" I pray not.

That is why we do this. In the promise of what Crossroads' faith and love can mean for those we will touch. Amen.