

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Ordinary Stuff

Sermon Reflection Notes

Paul's angry, passionate letter to the churches of Galatia provides a glimpse of the controversy that surrounded the expansion of the Christian movement into Gentile mission churches in the ancient Mediterranean world. The identity of the newly established mission churches was up for grabs. Were these new churches supposed to adopt the practice of circumcision? Were Gentile converts bound to accept Jewish practices and values? By the middle of the first century, the struggle over such questions had burst into open conflict. Paul saw the struggle for identity in a vivid image: As the apostle whose preaching had brought these communities into being, he is like a mother in the throes of labor until they are fully formed, not as keepers of Jewish law, but according to the image of Christ (Galatians 4:19)

As Paul would have us understand, faith in Christ is recognizing and then surrendering to the knowledge that we have been 'crucified with Christ' in order to have Christ live in us. It is the understanding that we are not in charge, no matter what culture tells us about being able to 'have it our way.' Rev. Schuermann told two stories of two very different encounters with God; the first was Steven's experience with a bright, overwhelming light that entered his garage as he was admiring his home and his work of the day. Steven wasn't looking for Jesus. He didn't consider himself to be a sinner or in need of saving and yet, Jesus showed up and Steven's life was changed. The second story showed another experience, that of a busy, tired pastor just trying to get through the final class assignment in pursuit of a degree. She taught a young adult class for six weeks about the root causes of homelessness. She was passionate about the topic but going through the motions while teaching the assigned class. And although she might not have been experiencing the bright, overwhelming power of God, God was still moving and the class found a purpose and a way to have Christ live in them.

The church, we as Christians, are still struggling with identity. We get caught up in rules and regulations, in searching for the 'right' way to be in relationship with God and each other. We often think that the 'bright light' moments have to happen to us in order to have Christ live in us. But as the sermon title suggests, we also need to be aware and tune in to the ordinary stuff, the small everyday choices and encounters that move us ever closer to God.

Scripture

Galatians 2:19-20 (NRSVUE)

¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, ²⁰ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Discussion Questions

1. Who are some of the characters in Scripture who have been surprised by God?
2. Who are some of the characters in Scripture who have been more quietly nudged by God toward a journey of faith?
3. What would Paul say is the difference between being a 'keeper of the law' and living in the image of Christ?
4. What does God's freedom look like?
5. Where does God's freedom lead us? What does having Christ live in you look like, sound like, and feel like?
6. The Kingdom of God can be likened to a tapestry, a large beautiful work showing the world as God desires it to be. Rev. Schuermann suggested that we can get caught up in the transformation, the bright lights, but that in the end, it all comes back to us and our ordinary choices and lives. So how do we go about contributing to the tapestry, to building the Kingdom of God?

Closing Prayer

Holy and Gracious God, you come to us in the brilliance of the sun and you come to us as a thief in the night. You come to us in the music of a hymn and you come to us in the smile of a child. We would like to prescribe your coming, but in your great freedom you will not allow us to make the rules. And for that we are sometimes grateful. We pray for the faith to know the truth of your steadfast love and grace. We pray always, in the name of the One who is Jesus. Amen.

*And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me.*