LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH, Garner, NC 1/19/20

Honor Comes from Serving the World

In the name…

Let us pray….

Those of us who have glasses know how important they are. If we take them off, everything is blurred, We can see, but not clearly. We need the glasses to see things as they really are. Scripture is the glasses for our lives. Only with those glasses, Scripture can we see the world and understand that we are called to an upside down kingdom. Isaiah describes a Servant Who is Israel. Verse 3 But that servant, Israel, ministers to Israel gathering Israel back to God, but Israel does not stop there. Israel ministers to Israel Verse 5 and beyond Israel as a Light for all the nations Verse 6. Great suffering will be part of the Servant’s calling, verse 4, I have worked for nothing, verse 7 despised, abhorred by nations, slave of rulers, but then, “Honored before the powerful” this servant is, kings and princes will prostrate themselves. And how can this be? It is the good news of an upside down kingdom. ‘Honor comes in serving the world”.

I am proud to say that my cousin, Kendra Rinas, has been doing just that.

She has been in Uganda, Chad, Ghana, Nairobi, and most recently Malaysia. She works for the International Organization for Migration. She is Chief of Mission to Malaysia. She is honored and her family is honored by her serving the world. We as a congregation were honored as we served families from Myanmar and the Congo not so long ago.

Israel of Isaiah struggled with apparent failure.” I have labored in vain, I have spent m strength for nothing and vanity.” This he thinks even though he was chosen in the womb and the prophet’s word is like a sharp sword or arrow. Kendra may have had times when she felt that. I know some of you felt that in our second refugee sponsorship. However, I invite you to join me in picking up a family of 5 from Afghanistan who want to attend the potluck tomorrow at Lutheran Services of the Carolinas celebrating our refugee immigrants. Honor comes in serving the world.

Isaiah reminds Israel, you maybe abhorred now, but one day kings will bow down to you. In Epiphany we remember that kings have already bowed,,, to Jesus, whose words often fell on deaf ears.

In the Gospel, John calls Jesus the “Lamb of God”. And two of John’s disciples heard him say that, and they followed Jesus. And then, they must have been nervous, they must have choked in the presence of Jesus, they ask Him a doozy of a question. Where are you staying?” Really. Is that the best you can do as someone who now chooses to follow Jesus? And He responds, “Come and see”. It is the only look we get into where Jesus might have been staying any time in His adult ministry. And one of the two was Andrew Peter’s brother. He introduces Peter to Jesus and, as they say, the rest is history.

Father Greg Boyle founder of Homeboy Industries in LA tells of how when “Gang members began to “kick it at the first church he was called to”, there was grumbling so he called a parish meeting. He did not speak, but the E F Huttons of the congregation did. They said, “We help gang members at this parish because that is what Jesus would do.” People applauded and the parish never looked back. Honor comes in serving the world.

When we support LSC we are honoring the world. When we support GAM we are honoring the world. When we give to Lutheran World Relief, we are honoring the world. When we give to read a book we are honoring the world. When we host the Rotary breakfasts we are honoring the world since Rotary’s goal is still to completely eliminate Polio from the world.

Andrew and Peter were merely the first to become part of this all-reaching group of followers of Jesus which would eventually spread throughout the world. We have joined their illustrious legacy and our offspring and their offspring will do the same. We worship the One Who is the Light of the entire the world and by what we do our Light goes out to the world.

April 16-19 the world will be coming to Lake Benson Park, well not the world, but people throughout North Carolina. The Wall that Heals will be there. It will be the Sunday after Easter, low Sunday, and so at the very least our worship that day will focus on giving thanks for those who have given their lives in the conflict in Vietnam. Through this travelling model of the wall, the lights of those who die still shine.

I have penciled Thursday and Saturday for times when our hall might host bands that might perform at the wall. And we might think of other ways we can support this event perhaps leaving the church open for meditation or necessary functions.

And maybe just maybe we light reflect that is going to shine just a quarter mile from us

In the name…

LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH Garner, NC 1/26/20

Reflections of the Year

In the name…

Let us pray….

If we reflect on the Church Year, we must start with Advent where we wait, that is the nature of the season. And it is SO hard to wait. Luckily December always seems to fly by so the wait is accelerated.

Father Greg Boyle founder of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles and author of “Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion.” Tells stories about the Homeboys. This one was Grumpy. He met him and gave him his card as he does with many of the homeboys he meets in LA, and Grumpy and he tells him he will remove his tattoos if he comes in. Well Grumpy belligerently says “Why did I get them if I am just going to take them off?”

Five months later he sees him at a Lakers game when homeboys in a detention camp were taken to a game and Boyle was there. He knows most of them and the third from the last was Grumpy who does not extend his hand to shake it, but throws his arms around Father Boyle and whispers I his ear, “I get out Tuesday, I will call you Wednesday, I want my tattoos off Teihard de Chardin once said “we must wait and trust in the slow work of God.” Ours is a God Who waits for us. When is Pastor Wayne ever going to take some time to “Slow down and just wait for inspiration from my Holy Spirit. Then I think of NyJier one of my students. I toilet him and empty his colostomy bag. I do it around 8:30, before lunch and before getting on the bus minimally. He will be sitting in his usual place and I will tell him, “let’s go to the bathroom” I might say it more than once. Then it sinks in and he gets right up. We wait for the slow work of God. And He comes at Christmas, He becomes One of us. And we know there will always be light as the lessons today and throughout Epiphany tell The light shines in the darkness, those who walked in darkness have seen a great light That light shines brightly.

Our Ash Wednesday ashes remind us of our need for a Savior, and we prepare for that with prayer and repentance leading up to Holy Week when we get a preview of our Savior Who rides into Jerusalem amidst accolades from the crowd only to have those sheers turn into jeers. I have stated that my excuse would be if someone or some group wanted to take my life from me is that I could not leave my family behind or I have some much still to do. When Jesus was up against those who sought to take His life, Pilate, Herod, the religious authorities, the crowd; He asked His Father in heaven whether there was another way. He did not say, I have much to do still as our gospel says teaching, proclaiming good news of the kingdom, healing. He could not leave that to the disciples, they need My leadership, more training. At first things did not look too good, it did not look like the disciples were going to step up. Nonetheless, after He died, and was resurrected and taken into heaven, the Spirit came upon the disciples and they stepped up to the task. And during our worships throughout the longest season of the Church Year, Pentecost, we rediscover the instances when those disciples and later ones, like Paul, Titus, and Silas took up Jesus’ ministry of teaching, proclaiming the good news, and curing illnesses.

And we do the same. As I prepare my pastor’s report each month for the church council, I use 5 categories, worship, that is the foundation of our community of faith and it is paired with outreach, because each time we come together on our Sabbath which we are commanded to do we are witnessing to those who may be joining us for worship the first time or witnessing to those who may have been lax in worship attendance. We witness to one another as we commit to remembering the Sabbath and, in a sense, shouting out from this sanctuary that we want to minimally come together as a community to give praise and thanks to God thereby keeping the Sabbath holy. More than a decade ago, there was a really comical movie called RV Robin Williams was very outstanding in the road trip his family did not totally embrace. But a line in the film by his “unwanted friend” played by Jeff Daniels I always remember, he tells his wife “I am chagrined because it seems Williams and his family did not share their want to join with them in activities”. He says that as Williams family speeds away. I am chagrined when some of us do not embrace not just worship opportunities but ministries that are important outreach opportunities, for example Rotary breakfasts which fund so many activities we sponsor in the community or upcoming pine straw sale, paper shredding all supporting Camp Agape/Kure Beach ministries. In January’s newsletter I mentioned even small tasks that people could take on. Remember whatever we do in this regard is a means of Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

When we choose to take advantage of educational, nurturing opportunities we are witnessing to children and others that growing in our faith by means of lifelong study is important to us and our community of faith. We Inreach to our people with the names of people in need of prayers on the board in the bulletin and newsletter. I bring support and comfort to all those whom I know of who are sick or shut in and even others whom we do not know. We are to follow Jesus by curing every disease and sickness. Now of course my faith is not strong enough to move mountains let alone heal someone, but often my prayer for those sick is for physical healing and spiritual growth, greater relationship with God, which is a form of healing.

We reach out to the community in many and various ways, minimally I have a table with info and my presence at the Eggstravaganza at Lake Benson Park and Trick or Treat at White Deer Park and we are going to have a wonderful opportunity to be very visible as the Vietnam Wall comes to the park April 16-19.

We worship we nurture we provide care we fellowship together and we take very opportunity to proclaim the good news of God in Jesus Christ

In the name.