

## Lent II Year C

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing.”

This past Friday Mary, and your delegates and I attended our diocesan convention. We elected people to commissions, elected new members to the Standing Committee, heard reports of ministry happening around the diocese, considered the greatly cut back budget, listened to a presentation of the diocese’s five year plan.....It was, to say the least, a long day...a long day that was for me redeemed by the preaching of Michael Curry, bishop of North Carolina and our chaplain for the convention....He reminded us about the bottom line...that amid our conventioning and institutionalizing that we, at the bottom line, are a people of mission...that our gatherings as people of faith are not by accident or random chance...but that we are a people of divine providence who in our baptisms are immersed into the very life of God, the life of God given to the world...a people loved by our God into mission, to make real God’s dream for the world that God loves....

We also considered resolutions...which are statements made by the whole of the convention intended to express the mind of the Episcopal Church in our particular diocese, the diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. One resolution that was presented challenged the legislature of the State of Alabama to modernize its constitution...to eliminate racist and classist language...in short, to make it just...One delegate from my home town of Dothan stood up and addressed the convention....He said he wished the delegates would reject this resolution because, as he put it, the church has no business with the affairs of the state...with the affairs of economic and social policy...Another delegate seconded him by saying that if we were to enact such a resolution we would indeed be contrary to the separation between church and state. The resolution passed overwhelmingly.

So let’s have a little ecclesiastical reality check here. If the people of faith remain silent as to the well being of our common life as local, state and national citizens....If we remain silent on matters of equality and inclusion and fairness and mercy, silent on matters of justice....who then will speak? Who then will speak for the good?....It could be, and often is, that in our silence we become complicit with injustice around us....The so-called doctrine of the separation of church and state has to do with the prohibition of the institutions of religion and government comingling...a doctrine, in short, against theocracy, and that is needed....but to live our lives as people

of faith, we must give voice for the good...we must study and think critically, and teach generations after us the same.... so that we learn the art of telling the truth....telling the truth...what we're made for...we as the baptized live our lives for the common good, whether it be for local or the state or the nation or the world...It is for the commonweal of humanity to whom we are given...given for its transformation into God's passionate dream for this world that all manner of thing be made well and whole and alive with God's luminous Spirit....Our preacher Friday reminded us that when we live into that for which we were made, there is incalculable energy there; he was living proof...and no fear there....only love...love alive....love that brings change for the better.

In this morning's Gospel Luke gives us a hint as to how we might live as the conscientious faithful, as prophets in our own day....Jesus now, for Luke, in his full role as prophet, looking upon Jerusalem as had all the prophets of old in Israel's history....He looks upon Jerusalem, the center of the universe for the Jewish people, Jerusalem, a symbol of the whole of the house of Israel then and now...Jerusalem the world...He looks upon its unwillingness to serve fairly....Its turning a deaf ear to the good and the true....its corruption and treachery....but in the same few lines Jesus expresses his profound love for her...that he would gather her children under his proverbial wings....motherly love which always forgives, always.

So that's the prophet's dilemma is it not?...the prophet's dilemma and ours as people of faith...our dilemma as post-modern prophets....it's a two sided vocation...this noble vocation of the prophet....on the one hand we are duty bound to critique our world....duty bound to name the indignity and injustice around us....duty bound to live lives of compassionate advocacy for the least in our world....and where there is injustice and indignity, institutional or otherwise...we don't remain silent, we don't remain the irrelevant church....comfortable, withdrawn from our broken world....we call it out with both humility and the authority that goes with this noble vocation...this noble vocation, this vocation whose mantle was placed about our shoulders at our baptisms....our immersion into the very life of God...immersed in the matters of the Spirit....the Spirit moving still over the face of creation bringing life and life abundant...creating still from the formless deep....

And then on the other hand, the other side of our vocation, we are to love as a mother loves...as a mother loves...demanding the best for her children...protecting them...calming their fears...making sure they heal...and always, always forgiving...the prophet's dilemma is:...to love fully....to love the world while passionately engaged with it...to love the

dark and the light...the whole of the matter that God calls good....loving it into its perfection...beginning with each act of love bourn by sacrifice.

We will not resolve this dilemma perfectly...we will make mistakes...but we are promised the presence of the Spirit with us....that God, Godself who bears the same dilemma as we...is with us...with us in this high vocation given to us at our baptism...This high vocation, the way of the Christ...the way of artful and enlightened sacrifice for the good of our brother...for the good of our sister...for the good of this planet....this vocation is God's very mission...God's mission to complete the mysterious and marvelous project God started in the beginning...and we dear ones are honored to have a profound role in this mission....ours is to walk the way of Christ, the Spirit way...the way of God....bringing the beautiful and the good to fruition....the presence of the Spirit equals the presence of the kingdom.

What a noble thing we have been immersed into...a noble thing we are called life-long to....noble, because it is God's life of love...and that is a life of love for us and for all....Let us brother and sister prophets, we of noble birth, of hereditary rank, get about the dilemma... let us weep for Jerusalem...and as sure as the dawning light, let us celebrate as well her salvation.