

Message: *May the Kin-dom Reign in Our Hearts*

May God's Grace and peace be with you this day! A few years ago (about 7yr) I was participating in choir and we were preparing a cantata for Easter. Our tradition was to sing a cantata on Palm Sunday. A debate ensued about whether or not to sing the final song. The title was, "Go, Tell It". Some thought that song should not be sung until Easter Sunday, others thought it best to sing the work in its entirety. Being on my path toward ordained ministry, I was asked to give an opinion. I saw both sides of the debate and wrestled with what to say. The dramatic climax of the passion story ends in sorrow, but theologically the best is yet to come. Then there's the understanding that Sundays are celebrations of hope, so the piece deserved to be sung. Personally, I was hooked on the phrasing and lyric of the song (which Joseph Martin does that so well).

The truth is, I don't remember the decision, I only remember the song. Here's why...my heart had been changed. In responding to this call, I had a fresh understanding of the good news of new life and that lyric, 'Go tell it', resonated with my new path. That song became the final piece in a triad of songs that reflected my understanding of this call to ministry. (The first is Do You Hear What I Hear? And the other is Go, Tell It On the Mountain)

As I read /reread the scriptures for today, I was caught by the directives to 'TELL' in both readings. Ready to dig a little deeper?

In the text from the letter to Timothy, the writer is nearing the completion of words to the young leader. This selection is full of wise sayings... 'be happy with what you have... 'We didn't bring anything into the world and so we can't take anything out of it' ... 'be happy with food and clothing'...and 'love of money is the root of all kinds of evil' (v6b-10). These were very popular sayings in the Hellenistic-Roman period.

Much like a commencement speech or ordination message, the writer then sets forth a charge for the young leader: DO THIS... Run from all evil AND...pursue doing good (holy living, faithful, generous, love, endure, gentle aka the fruit of the Spirit) AND TELL people... to place their trust in God... to do good, to be generous, and to share SO THAT they have a foundation and a hold on eternal life.

In essence, GO, TELL IT! Tell the people about Kin-dom Living...GO, TELL IT!

The Gospel reading is a parable which demonstrates the great chasm of life... the haves and the have-nots and dramatically portrays the need for Kin-dom Living... so that all may have abundant life. Abundant life is available to all; it is offered and requires only a response of YES! to share, to care, and to TELL others.

The challenge, friends, is to live as doers of the word, not as hearers only of the word; the challenge is to honestly reflect on actions we take in response to opportunities presented in each day to be generous, to be gentle, to give a word of encouragement, to offer prayer & hope.

We must also take action to share with our families and friends that faithful living is the path to walk and a priority. Let us be givers of thanks before meals in the home and in a restaurant. Let us be observed with bible & devotional tools in hand for a consistent time of worship, study, and devotion in home or on the way to a small group.

We must also challenge our family & friends to reflect on those practices that we've always done and consider if someone is overlooked, ignored, or in some way kept out of opportunities. Are there barriers to participation that can be addressed (like a ride to church)? In addition, how do we respond to comments, jokes or mannerisms that devalue another?

We can look at the news to know that there are plenty of challenges for all of us, and particularly those in authority, and for those who place their lives in danger for the common good, and for those who have a mantle of power given by office. With our families and friends, It is important to share how faithful Kin-dom living responds to patterns of fear, corruption, and privilege.

Remember, Kin-dom Living is NOW. HERE. THIS. I pray that during our walk together your heart is changed... is opened... even more to new life in Christ and this call to kin-dom living. I pray that the power of God's love for each of one of us is understood as our freedom to choose, not to be coerced or forced, and to respond. GO, Tell It!... and if necessary, use words!

Amen.