

“Being Foolish” Joshua 24:1-3a,14-25; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13; Psalm 78:1-7 11-06-05

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
 Forgive our foolish ways.
 Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
 In purer lives thy service find,
 In deeper reverence, praise.

That familiar old hymn is one I think I need to sing to myself at least once each week, if not every day. How many foolish ways do I pursue on a daily basis? How many foolish ways do we all pursue in one week? Foolish ways are noted in all three of this morning’s scripture readings and they are ways all of us have entertained from time to time.

The first, mentioned in the Old Testament book of Joshua, is that of worshipping false gods, far lesser beings than the one true God. The nation Israel slipped often in this regard, but then, so do we. We have as many other gods we like to pay homage to as they did. Ours may not be made of gold or sculpted from clay. They may only appear in our minds and pursuits. But they are present, nonetheless.

We worship the gods of pride and ego, of money and acquisitions, of power and control. We set aside the pursuit of the God that can make us happy and fulfilled in a spiritual sense for the ones that make us temporarily happy and content. We exhaust the value of our smaller gods and need to always seek newer ones, newer areas in which we may feel we are important and valued. But, in time, we find, that these lesser gods can never fill and satisfy us forever.

It would be good if we discover which God we are to serve for once and for all as did Joshua and his house and as did the nation Israel in our reading. Of course, we will slip as did the Israelites, but our God is gracious, long-suffering and forgiving and patiently waits for us to turn once again in the right direction. The direction of service to God and to our fellow humans that always lies before us. The direction that beckons us to open our eyes and hearts to one another and to see each other with the eyes and heart of God—a heart that neither judges nor condemns.

Of course, we can always be like the not-so-wise bridesmaids and in spite of many opportunities to be ready to go and meet the bridegroom, be unprepared. We may be warned and instructed by words of scripture and by the teachings of Jesus. We may hear without possessing the depth of true listening and without integrating the teachings into our life course. We may be foolish in the many ways we use to close our eyes to the way, the truth and the life. But, there will always come a day of reckoning when we will have to answer for all the ways we have turned away from one another, refused forgiveness, love, understanding – when we have sought other gods of lesser, easier ways of living. And, we will wake up to emptiness and loneliness with lamps never lit and never glowing to help us find the way. We read often of a “wailing in the darkness and of a gnashing of teeth” a time when we discover what it is we have missed in life by closing our selves off from others and from love and graciousness, and forgiveness. When we value ourselves and our own desires above those of others and of God, we find our selves with empty lamps.

Have you ever loved someone with passion and devotion only to be refused such love in return? Those of us who have understand, just a little, how God must feel after pouring out eons of love on God’s foolish humans only to have that love be unrequited.

But God never mourns this lack of love without hope. God always has hope in the promise of the present and the future. As the children of God, we must never mourn the losses we have suffered without hope. Paul reminds us of this in the First Letter to the Thessalonians. No matter what we may have suffered, no matter how we have been disappointed we must never lose hope in what is to be. Never. If we do, we lose the promise of life—life that is fulfilled and

overflowing, life that is rich in the spirit and rich in God. If we lose hope in what may be, we are foolish beings, indeed.

Our sacrament of communion is meant to reawaken our hope in the promises of God, to renew our covenant with our Maker through the life, death, resurrection and teachings of Christ. It is to provide oil for our lamps.

We do not come to the Lord's Table because we must, but because we may. We do not come bearing our false gods of pride and accomplishment before us, but stripped of all the falsehoods we may carry about our selves or about others.

We must come setting aside all the foolishness we have about our own importance, our own power, our own control. At the table of our Lord we are all equal, we are all on the same level. Rich person or poor, famous or infamous, we are all one body of Christ joined together by the taking of these elements which represent the body and the blood of the one who loved us and died that we may understand the meaning of our lives as individuals and as a community of faith. It is time to set aside the foolishness we so love to become reclothed in our rightful mind and become more genuine people through this sacrament we celebrate in remembrance of him and his way. Amen