

WORSHIP NOTES

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost • September 25, 2011

The Season

Outside our doors there are signs of significant changes to come. We are surrounded by the changing colors of autumn's rich palette, and the autumn equinox this past Friday (September 23) marks the beginning of shorter days and cooler temperatures. There are also signs of change in our journey through Ordinary Time. Our texts over the summer provided teachings and episodes from the ministry of Jesus to help us grow in faith and in our discipleship. As we move closer to the end of the Church Year, we look more closely at our response. We hear readings that challenge us to change – to transform our hearts and lives, to consider our place in the world and the message of forgiveness, hope, and peace that we are to share.

Today we are also highlighting “Creation Care,” and our liturgy celebrates God’s wonderful creation and our call as people of faith to be good stewards of this gift.

In Word . . .

There is a theme of doing God’s will in our readings today. Ezekiel is a word to the exiles that they are not to blame their ‘fathers,’ that each individual is responsible for his or her relationship with God. The will of God in our Philippians text is defined in the life of Jesus who chose the characteristics of humility, service, and obedience. In today’s Gospel, Jesus is in conflict with the religious officials who are confident they are doing the will of God, and Jesus points out that the will of God is in our actions and not just our words. Jesus is confronted by the chief priests and elders who want to know by “what authority” he has been doing “these things.” Jesus answers their question with a question regarding the authority of John the Baptizer and then tells a parable of two sons. The first son at first refuses the invitation to work in the vineyard, but later has a change of heart (repentance) and goes. The second son says he will go, but does not. It is easy to direct this parable to others, the priests and scribes known for their words and not their deeds, but this parable is also for us. Are we the faithful or the unfaithful son? Repentance means looking at ourselves honestly and acknowledging our failings, our times of saying ‘yes’ and then not doing anything, and our times of saying ‘no’ when we should have said yes. Ultimately we are not bound by our past actions and what we have done, but by what God in Christ has done for us . . . The vineyard is a place of God’s grace, we are invited to “turn and live.”

And Song . . .

9:00 a.m. (Traditional)

Our opening hymn, “At the Name of Jesus,” is by Caroline Noel, and it was first published in a collection of her works, *The Name of Jesus and Other Poems for the Sick and Lonely*. The verses are based on Philippians 2:5-11 (part of today’s second reading), considered by many scholars to be a first century hymn quoted by Paul in his letter. The tune, KING’S WESTON, is by Ralph Vaughan Williams, and it is named for a manor house on the Avon River near Bristol.

10:30 a.m. (Contemporary)

Throughout the summer portion of Ordinary Time, our second reading was from Paul’s letter to the Romans. Last week we began reading from another of Paul’s letters, Philippians. It is one of Paul’s warmest and most encouraging letters, and two of our songs today are based on verses from this book. “Let the Mind of Christ” by Carol Browning quotes Philippians 2:5 (from our Second Reading) and “Only This I Want” by Dan Schutte is based on Philippians 2:15, 18 and 3:7-16.