

Institution Sermon 11-16-2011

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As a child I remember waiting with anticipation for presents to begin to show up under our Christmas tree. My mother wrapped presents beautifully and in such a way that there was no undetectable way to peel back a corner to discover what was inside. I could only smell, shake, and wonder at the contents based on the weight and size of the package. She was an early present wrapper as well so that by Christmas morning, the anticipation was bubbling out of me to get at those gifts. No matter how hard I tried to refrain from tearing right through the beautiful wrapping, I had to rush to get at the gift itself. And then having proclaimed with glee my joy at each gift, I started planning on how I could share what I had received with others. After all, who wants to open a present and then hide it away or not tell everyone about it? If the gift was a game, then when could my friends gather to play it? If it was a dress or jewelry, when would the next party be to wear it to celebrate with my friends? One of my most memorable gifts was a dollhouse that my mother had decorated and furnished with hand painted walls, wallpaper, paintings, handmade rugs, and battery operated working lights...a big deal 40 years ago. My friends and I played with it until we were way into our early adolescence and then later having two boys, I had the joy of my niece playing with it, and later giving it to a good friend's daughter who then passed on the gift to another family.

We are each created by a God who has abundantly showered us with gifts. God has created us in his image to be uniquely us.....but all created in his likeness. We have each been given different gifts.....now we can choose to use these gifts for the work of the kingdom or for selfish purposes. I believe that God desires for us to open and share our gifts with the same zeal with which we tear into presents with childlike exuberance because it takes generously using all of our gifts together in harmony to work as the body of Christ in the world.

We live in a world that tells us that he or she with the most toys win so it takes great courage to give away the gifts we have been given. It takes courage to proclaim by word and action and service the love and hope of Christ. How many times do we think either individually or as a community that we cannot make a difference or that if we give what we have away, we will be left with nothing? That is thinking that comes from fear. God calls us to be and act out of faith and love and gratitude. Do not be afraid or discouraged...be strong and of good courage.

As a community of faith, we can look to the future and all of the work we all called to do with an anxiety of fear. Or we can look at our journey with an anticipation of hope. Fear stagnates us; it stunts our growth. Fear causes us to look only inside of ourselves with doubt and a fear of failure. Fear leads to spiritual blindness and self-centeredness. Hope leads us to wonder, to dream, to have the humility to love one another in a selfless way and to have the courage to vision to take the next step together as the one body of Christ.

I have heard it said by some that we who are St David's are a church which is nestled in the middle of a neighborhood whose challenge is visibility and making our presence known. I have come to deeply believe that we are a church surrounded by a [mission field](#) which includes a school with a community of parents yearning for hope and promise for their children while trying to give their best to them in the midst of a chaotic world that never slows down. It is our call to show up and give our best to the children entrusted to our care and their families.

We have an entire neighborhood to reach out to and share the gift of the good news of the new life given to us by the death and resurrection of Christ. And that neighborhood spans literally from one end of the economic spectrum to the other. And Thanks be to God, we are a church filled people with the passion to teach, nurture, show compassion and who are willing to give the time and resources to make Christ's presence known out there, in the lives of people wherever they are. Ft Sam is also part of our surrounding mission field filled with more and more people literally whose lives are ever changing who are giving their lives to serve others every day. We have a congregation filled with people who know that story intimately. We have Agape, Park Lane, and Exceptional Adults all in our mission field. The work is never ending. It is exciting, challenging and life giving. We are called to be the church here and out there to make Christ's presence known.

Christ commands us to love one another as Christ loves us. When we reach out to one another seeking and serving Christ, we are blessed to see the image of Christ reflected back to us. Through Christ we are interconnected to one another as one body, and through us the world sees the light and love of Christ. Do we have enough to give to make a difference? The little boy in our gospel passage gave all he had and God blessed it and fed thousands with plenty left over from which to feed more. God takes what we give out of love and gratitude, blesses it, and feeds more people in more ways than we can ever imagine. Every time we gather to worship and give glory and thanks to God, God feeds us through the gift of raising our voices in prayer and beautiful song, through hearing the word of God and through the sacrament of breaking bread together. We are forgiven, restored, fed, so that we can be Christ for one another in this community and beyond...in our families, our work places, our

schools, our neighborhoods, all the places in which we live and move and have our being. We come face to face with people every day who are hurting, longing for hope, longing for love....we are created to be the instruments of that love, hope, and compassion. God longs for us to reach deep inside of ourselves as individuals and as a community to give of ourselves and our resources to make a difference, to be Christ.

I am blessed to be part of this journey with you at this time in this place....I am thankful and humbled that you have trusted God to entrust me to lead you and walk beside you doing the work of God's kingdom in the world. We have come to know each other well, and I know that I can say whole heartedly that I love you and my ministry with you each and every day. We have walked quite a path together the last 2 1/2 years, and we have healed and grown together as the Body of Christ, with God's help and the Spirit at work in us. We have a lot of work to do, we always will, but we have been given an abundance of gifts with which to carry out this work together. May we engage in this work with childlike, not childish, but childlike faith and anticipation. A faith full of trust and wonder and joy and hope. May we be bold and courageous in sharing the different gifts we have been given with which to shine the light of Christ.....and may we be bold and courageous in going outside of ourselves meeting people where they are to do the work of the kingdom together.

Amen.