

Sunday, February 6, 2022

Grace and Peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

Many times, we read our texts for any given Sunday, and we search for a common theme. Sometimes we need to do more searching than other times. I believe that the common theme today is this: We are forgiven. Our guilt is now a thing of the past. Our sin is blotted out and the result is that we are given a mission from God.

Since the first "Mission: Impossible" movie I have been a fan. I like the old TV series as well. In the movies Tom Cruise was the only one who could possibly complete the mission, no matter how impossible it seemed. I like the action from start to finish.

But, as I said this morning, we are dealing with passages of scripture that I'm labeling "Mission: Possible." And the first step toward completing our mission is to repent – that is, to return to the Lord.

Isaiah makes that clear to us today as he spoke to God's people some years before their time of exile.

Psalm 138 is a psalm of thanksgiving exulting God's ways and stating in wonderful ways the sheer goodness of God, the Lord poured out to those who follow him continuously.

We also find Paul telling the Corinthians that he is hardly worthy of being called an apostle. It is only by God's grace that he is an apostle and therefore he gives his all to spread the good news of God in Christ Jesus.

In our gospel text we find Luke telling us that when we realize that we are sinful human beings one reaction is to want to distance ourselves from God. We do that because we feel unworthy.

But Luke also reminds us that God will have none of that. Jesus comes to us to calm us and reassure us as he speaks to us, "Do not be afraid."

And as we find that as our fears subside, they are replaced by a mission from God. For James and John their mission was to catch people for God instead of casting nets on the sea in hopes of catching fish.

Mission: Possible.

We continue to be in the season of Epiphany where we find Jesus manifested, where we find Jesus is made known in a variety of ways.

Jesus is the ultimate manifestation of Isaiah's words to the Israelites so long ago.

Jesus is manifested in our gospel as the one who personally calls followers and gives them a job which appears to be part of his plan and mission to speak to a new way of living and loving.

Paul gives us a very personal account of how Jesus was able to completely turn his life around, how he went from persecutor of the faithful to an apostle.

Jesus continues to be manifested through those who follow him. He gives us all we need to accomplish the particular job he calls us to undertake.

What a terrific witness to the power and love of God. There is no doubt that Christ died for our sins.

And just so, you and I know and confess that Jesus died on a horrid cross for our sake, for our sins. Of that there is no doubt whatsoever.

That being so then, what is our "Mission: Possible"? What have we been called to do in Christ's name for the sake of God and of one another?

If we look at our mission in large brush strokes we find almost a laundry list of concepts: love one another, forgive as we are forgiven. Be prayerful followers, be as Luther would have us become, "Little Christs" to the whole world.

We could obviously go on and on.

But, as Paul talked about his personal "Mission: Possible," have we ever considered that idea, that notion in our own lives? Have we ever thought about what our "Mission: Possible" would be?

I'm guessing here but I think chances are good that you and I don't see our mission as being a carbon copy of Paul's. Who among us is called to be an itinerant preacher? Going from village to town, being mistreated and looked upon with skeptical eyes?

Again, probably not. But what might our personal mission from God look like right now? And that question of course implies that we might have more than one mission in our lifetime and may, in fact, have more than one at any given time. How might we define our mission today?

I believe that as we begin the process of thinking about and attempting to answer that question that we certainly do not need to be a Paul or James or John to be able to answer the question. We remember that to each of us is given gifts and knowledge that we are to use to spread the good news of Christ to the world. In that sense we surely do have job security, don't we?

As we work through the process, we also need to keep in mind that our mission is only one part of our life. We know that we are followers of Christ 24/7 and to some extent Christ informs us throughout each day. But we are also in numerous relationships with others, with our job, with other institutions, etc.

So, in one sense our mission may be narrower than someone else's, but it is still incorporated in all we are about. Our lives are indeed many faceted, complicated and diverse.

And certainly, we know that many of us are called to missions that center within the confines of our congregation and the church's mission to community and world.

Where would we be without teachers of all sorts, leaders on Council and heads of committees and groups, Bible study leaders, leaders in community service and outreach?

Others are called to sing the choir, to be an instrumentalist, teach Sunday school and Catechetics. Others serve on committees or lead groups. Some are called toward serving outreach efforts of all sorts and kinds within the neighborhood and larger community. Some are called to give their time and talent to the wider church expressions of our synod and beyond.

Still others are called to visit the sick, the lonely and home-bound members. Others serve in areas of hospitality and fellowship.

And maybe you've "been there, done that" and may be wondering what now? You may be wondering if you still have a special mission from God.

I believe the short answer is that we always and forever have a mission from God based on his love for us that we continue to show, to manifest, in many and various ways.

We are still able to give guidance and direction to children, grandchildren as well as neighborhood kids,

We are still able to pray for those who have specific needs and for the well-being of our God-given world.

We are still able to uplift those who hurt for any number of reasons.

We may still be able to attend worship and Bible study, being uplifted and uplifting those who are around us. The list goes on and on. I am hopeful that you have added more words, phrases, concepts as I gave you but a short list of how we might view our mission today.

I believe that most of us don't consciously think about our "Mission: Possible" as we wake up and go about our daily routines.

Yet, once we give it thought we may be surprised that we can, indeed, identify our own words and phrases that capture our current mission at this stage, at this moment in time.

It's time for an occasional homework assignment from me – may you take time this week to prayerfully consider what your "Mission: Possible" might be for you in this new year of 2022.

Thanks be to God. Amen