

PASTOR TIM'S INSTALLATION Feb 22, 2023

I preached at Tim's ordination and at his first installation. It seems rather fitting I would preach here, at what will probably be his last pastorate. We're both at that time of life when we recognize we don't have a lot of time left for other new beginnings, and that's okay. Life is good as it is.

The text from Isaiah makes it very clear that the God who created all that is, is the same God who calls us into being, who takes us by the hand and keeps us safe on this journey through life.

That is an incredible promise of presence. Life is always going to challenge us in some way. If we don't believe God is in the mix of life with us, we won't have the heart to live it. But when we can hear and live the truth that God's presence fills all of life, that we can't go where God is not, then we have courage for the journey.

No one knows at the beginning of a new thing how the story will unfold. We can't predict how this particular joining of pastor and congregation will be. Since this is life and we are human, we know there will probably be highs and lows, times of joy and times of loss, times when things seem to go smoothly and times that challenge you to your limits.

Your task is to embrace it all, knowing God is with you, and because of this, there's always possibility for new life.

Paul reminds us that even new life is held within jars of clay. We're human and easily disheartened by our inability to change the world. We try all different kinds of things and have no clue if what we do will ever make a difference.

In the face of this uncertainty, we often lose the energy to act. If we can't change the world, maybe it's better if we just take care of ourselves.

But we belong to a Lord who journeys, who invites us to follow him on the way. As we go along, we scatter seeds of God's love and light, and have no control over how they're received. Too often, when the response isn't what we expected or wanted, we feel like giving up, believing we have somehow failed.

If we think we are the life-givers of this journey, we'll lose hope. If we think we're responsible for holding it all together and making it work, we won't have the energy to sustain it.

We forget when the seeds are scattered, some of those seeds are failing on us. We are both scatterers and the soil that receives the seed. This means as we follow Christ, being God's love and light to others however we can, we are also being changed by the seeds that are falling into our willing hearts.

We're not just scattering facts about the gospel either. Neither are we just learning facts about our faith. This isn't an educational journey we can live in our heads. This is a

spiritual journey and must reach deeply into our hearts as well, and even further, into our spirits.

This is where the transforming work of Christ takes place in us. It's hard work following this Lord, because the hardest thing in this world is to change our minds.

Nevertheless, we are called to allow the transforming light of Christ to turn us inside-out, making us forever into people of deeper compassion and spiritual integrity. This doesn't happen overnight, and it's never finished in this life.

We know how hard this transformation is because we're trying to live it. How can we expect to power this same transformation in others? We can't All we can do is listen to the One we follow, doing whatever we can to reach into the suffering of this world with the healing grace of God, giving whatever comes out of it into the hands of the Divine.

We're not called to change the world, but to work with God to help heal it, beginning with ourselves. And anytime genuine healing takes place, change will naturally follow. And it will be God who guides and empowers this process. We don't limit what God would do by telling God how God needs to fix things. We trust the process because we trust the One who guides it.

As we walk on this way and allow Chris to heal us and change us, our hearts are open to a greater love that has the power to embrace all of life, scattering seeds of hope and healing with abandon.

When the Spirit of Christ touches every level of our lives and we're transformed into people of deeper compassion and grace, able to love without limit, then we are exactly where we're supposed to be on the journey.

Let that blossom forth in you new life together, and everything else will fall into place.

Holy Christ, you pull us deeper and deeper into your life, transforming us in ways we never expected. Help us not to put limits on your power to make us new, but to open our minds and hearts wide, and receive with trust all you would bring into our lives. You have brought this pastor and congregation together. Bless their journey with you life-giving love. Amen