

SERMON- Proper 22 (B)
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St. Timothy's Herndon, VA
October 6th, 2024

Job 1:1; 2:1-10

Psalms 26

Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Mark 10:2-16

OPENING:

However much I would love to wrangle that Gospel into a Stewardship pitch...
I am going to preach today from our Old Testament lesson and the first verse of the first chapter of the Book of Job:

There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

You are probably familiar with the first verse of the Children's Song "I am the Church." It goes, with accompanying hand motions, like this:

*The church is not a building;
the church is not a steeple;
the church is not a resting place;
the church is a people.¹*

The Chorus then backs up that strong, living, dynamic, incarnational definition of the 'Church:'

*I am the Church
You are the Church
We are the Church together.*

I have used that for the last three years as a structure for our Fall Sunday Adult Forums, trying to get us used to telling our stories, sharing our stories, about who we are as "The Church."

Stewardship season is indeed upon us, and that means many things, but one thing it requires for us is a renewed need to tell our story,
to proclaim the story of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ,
the story of the Church,
the story of this Church.

In doing so, we get this opportunity to "re-collect" and "to re-member" who we were, who we are, and who the Holy Spirit is in the process of calling us to be.

¹ https://hymnary.org/text/the_church_is_not_a_building

STORY:

How might the telling of our story of St. Tim's begin? How about in this way: "There was once a church in the land of Herndon, named St. Timothy's. **That** church was blameless and upright, one that feared God and turned away from evil."

That description is too good to be true. But, as stories go, it's piqued our interest. What is going to happen next? Could a church or a person actually exist that deserved that description? Does God favor them more because of it?

Our Old Testament reading began with such a story of this man named Job but, as we read, things don't necessarily go very well for him. It's the test case for "why do bad things happen to good people?"

HISTORY:

There is so much there, in this incredible book... I will concentrate on just one part: the fact that Job exists clearly outside of history. He is a fantastic character, who defies identification in time and place.

He is from the magical land of Uz, which sounds like "Oz" to me, but actually is in the East somewhere, an area that conveys mystery and great wisdom—think the Magi in the Christmas story.

Job also apparently possesses wealth beyond that of even Joseph or Abraham and the other patriarchs, and he possesses a faith in God that is truly remarkable. This story *seems* to be in the never-never land of myth and fable.

But somehow, for me, and I think for many, this story cuts to the heart of what's most real in our lives. Job is more real than most individuals in the Bible. Despite existing outside history, Job is utterly present with us in 2024: Job is the inspiring leader cut down short in life, Job is the saintly member of the family who suffers senselessly, Job is the child whose death shakes our confidence in the Almighty to its very core. In other words:

Job is not a person

Job is not an idea,

Job is not a fable

Job is us, all of us.

The story of Job shows what Scripture can do, what God's Word can do, how it can tell stories that have such meaning, that they can move across chronology and geography and plant themselves into our very hearts.

THE CHURCH:

According to the children's song, that's what the Church does as well.

The Church does not rest in one place but exists whenever and wherever the people are. Here is the little-known 3rd verse of "I am the Church":

*Sometimes the church is marching;
sometimes it's bravely burning,
sometimes it's riding, sometimes hiding;
always it's learning.*

St Timothy's: in a time of division and hurt and pain, we need to tell our story:

Let's tell that story to a world that aches for it.

Let's tell that story to a world that believes that all the Church does is hate.

Let's tell that story to a world that does not know what the Church is.

Here is how I would tell our story:

"There ~~was~~ is a church in the land of Herndon, whose name is St. Timothy's. That church ~~was~~ is where its people are, welcoming neighbor and stranger alike with God's love." That last bit happens to be our Stewardship Campaign theme.

During the week, the Church is with our Clergy and Staff, with the Preschool and our AA Groups.

Those, in fact, meet here.

But mostly, the Church is where you are, which is not here.

The Church is with our Service Ministry as they gather materials for LINK and for the needy of this community.

The Church is with our contributions and partnerships with CORNERSTONES,
The Church is with the money that goes from my Rector's Discretionary Fund to the needy of this community.

It's with Johnny Ellis who is headed to Western North Carolina as a part of his job, as he lives out his vocation helping those affected by Hurricane Helene.

It's with all of our teachers (Tim and Todd and Lydia and Michelle and Kimberly

and on and on) who take the “little children” (and big children) into their arms and educate our most precious treasure.

It's with Jill Norcross who works for Affordable Housing across Northern Virginia. It's with Michelle Cowherd as she runs the Mental Health Docket for Fairfax County.

It's with all of you who have jobs that I don't understand, working for governmental acronyms that I cannot decipher, at consulting firms in faceless buildings.

SALT REDUX:

Despite all that, we, at St. Tim's are, of course, not blameless and upright, we only sometimes fear God, and we only sometimes turn away from evil.

The paradox and genius of the Book of Job is that Job did and was all those things, but it did not matter.

I don't know how this book snuck into the Bible...

because it does not always give the sugar that people want, the idea that if I am good enough, then I will get rewarded for it on this life.

Instead it gives us the salt, that your sufferings and your pain will be shared by a God that loves you.

The Book of Job will be our companion this month of October and in this Stewardship season. I encourage you to read it by your lonesome sometime in the weeks ahead.

CONCLUSION:

We at St. Timothy's are fortunate that our story is easier to tell than Job's. Although we have had our share of hardship.

We are pretty sure of how it started: the November 1st, 1868 date as our founding. It started with ... started not in a church but in a parishioner's home, which is now a parking lot.

The Church is not a building.

The Church is not a steeple.

That first service was All Saints—emphasis on the ALL, as we welcome all into our midst

The Church is not a resting place

We turn 156 years old this year, but our best days are ahead of us. We will baptize

our latest member on All Saints this year. Because the

The Church is a people

who have stewarded God's love and shared it with stranger and friend alike here in Herndon and beyond for a century and a half plus now. We will continue to do so this month and beyond as we tell our story and sing our song. **AMEN.**