

**A Sermon Preached
at
St. George's Madrid
by
The Reverend Canon John W. Kilgore, M.D.
29 September 2019
Harvest Festival
St. Michael and All Angels
Genesis 28: 10-17
Psalm 100
Revelation 12: 7-12
John 1: 47-end**

From Genesis - The Lord is in this place

From the Gospel - How do you know me?

The Propers for today, the readings, are those appointed for the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, a major feast of the church which is actually tomorrow. And in our calendar we are also celebrating Harvest Festival today as well. In Genesis we hear, 'The Lord is in this place.' In Psalm 100 we pray, 'Make a joyful noise unto the Lord...Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name! For the Lord is good.' And in the Gospel today, from the first chapter of John, Nathanael wants to know 'How do you know me?'

If you look at the overall message in the first chapter of John, it all sort of comes together. The themes in that first chapter are: 'The Word Became Flesh.' 'John the Baptist proclaiming and recognizing Jesus.' 'Jesus being baptized and anointed by the Holy Spirit. And then Jesus calling his disciples. And as a part of that Nathanael wants to know 'How do you know me?' But overall, the story is about Jesus establishing his authority and the first thing he does is gather his community, assemble his team. For he knew that we are to live in community. And he models that for us oh so well.

And so as we gather for Harvest Festival, to Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, to enter his gates with thanksgiving, to give thanks and bless his name, we do so as a community. As the community of St. George's Anglican Church, as the Comunidad de Madrid, and as the community of God's people.

And we have much to be thankful for. For it is indeed a rich abundant earth, despite the challenges of climate change and global warming. And I have been reminded of that in an elegant way this past two weeks as I traveled from Spain to the USA and, due to my healthcare work, crisscrossed the United States, a total of four traverses across that large country, traveling probably twenty thousand miles. I had a lot of time to look down and appreciate what a rich and abundant earth it is.

When I flew out of Madrid Barajas we flew to the north and I was able to see the olive groves, the mountains, and the verdant hills of Galicia. In the United States I reveled in seeing the Rappahannock mountains in the Eastern US, the plains of the midwest with vast fields of corn and wheat across Kansas and Nebraska, the deserts of the southwestern US as well as the mountains and forests of Colorado, Idaho, and the gorgeous coastline of California. And yesterday as I flew back towards Spain I saw Portugal and western Spain. This earth is a beautiful creation. And so varied.

Indeed this is a rich and abundant earth on which we live. The clouds shower down rain upon the deserts and forests and plains, mountains and valleys. As the psalm says, 'Know that the Lord is God; it is he that has made us and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.' We are richly blessed by our God. So it is appropriate that we should gather in and celebrate the harvest of the rich earth with Harvest Festival, and be here doing it together, communally.

Jesus models community for us so well. Yes, he goes off and prays alone, but quickly returns to his time in community. John Dunne wrote that famous poem, No man is an island. That is put to words in a beautiful song I learned years ago, No man is an island, no man stands alone, each man's joy is joy to me, each man's grief is my own. We need one another, so I will defend each man as my brother, each man as my friend. Indeed we are so interconnected and need one another. We are richer and burn brighter when we are together.

The Lord is in this place. The Lord is among us. And we can shine and burn brightly when we remember that. We are reminded of it richly in the prayer of St. John Chrysostom, 'when two or three are gathered together in my Name, I will be in the midst of you...' We are to be together here, worshipping and praising God as a community. Shining brightly.

The story is told of the vicar in the northern English village of Cheltenhamshire. The vicar walked purposefully along the cobblestone streets and stopped unannounced to visit Mr. Dalwhimble. He hadn't seen him in the parish for at least a month of Sundays if not a couple of years. Mr. Dalwhimble, dressed in tweed trousers and heather cardigan sweater answered the door, pipe in mouth. The parson could see a low fire warming the old stone house with a thatched roof. As Mr. Dalwhimble peered out, he could see the familiar outline of the vicar against the low winter sun. Then he heard,

"Mr. Dalwhimble, came by to say hello. Here is a mum from our All Saints Day service today. Maybe there is a sunny corner in your garden where it will thrive."

"Nice to see ya, Father...Come in and warm yourself by the fire..."

"We've missed you around the parish."

"Yeah, it just doesn't seem right to come there without the missus..."

"It's been two and a half years now hasn't it?"

"Just shy of three..."

After rustling up a cup of tea and some biscuits, they chatted for a good bit. The vicar, at one point stood to warm himself at the hearth. As he did so, he picked up the fireplace tongs, grabbed a large bright red glowing coal and lifted it out onto the hearth. As they talked

pleasantries for the next few minutes the coal sputtered, grew cool, and turned grey, a small wisp of smoke wending its way toward the chimney and joining the main draft.

The two continued their discussions of the news of the day and the comings and goings of the small rural village for a bit. Not a whole lot happening there in the rolling English countryside.

Just as they were saying their goodbyes, the parson picked up the fireplace tongs and returned the coal to the fireplace where it blazed to life with bright red flames leaping up and joining the main body of the fire.

On the way out the door, "Good evening, Mr. Dalwhimble, we really miss seeing you at St. Agatha's..."

"I understand, parson....."

The next Sunday Mr. Dalwhimble was in church for the first time in the three years since his wife had died.

Community. St. George's. The Lord is here. we don't shine without showing up.

Amen.