

June 11, 2006
Trinity Sunday
Isaiah 6:1-8; Ps 29; Rom.
8:12; John 3:1-17

Love One Another We Must!

The Bible is full of stories of God's people who don't listen—or refuse to hear what the leaders suggest. Perhaps your church is like that sometimes. Probably the people are not to be blamed: they want order and the use of power on what they think is their behalf. They want what they already know—a king.

The more one reflects on Scripture, the deeper one comes in understanding God's relation to the creation. We are to give thanks and celebrate God's steadfastness. Our worship is to begin and end with praise. We can come to see how in the midst of trouble God preserves the people. More and more grace will come as the people do not lose heart.

Even so, it is hard both to seek God's favor and to hear what the responses are. Just as it was hard for the Israelite leaders to refuse to give the people the kind of king they wanted, it is not easy when we are seeking ways to live together to hear Jesus ask us right back: Who IS your mother and your brother? Everyone! It is the response that is so hard to embody in everyday life. This ethic of love is found throughout Scripture, and people have to work hard in history to even attempt to embody it. How hard even or especially now to work on legislation that brings equality and justice to all.

Where do you put your "but" to "love one another we must"? Even biologically related persons can sometimes not get along. The difficulties often seem insurmountable. But it is not up to us to end the dialogue or give up on the vision. For God is persistent both in making clear the expectation and in walking with us through the slow movements toward their realization.



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OPEN FORUM

On the theme "Called To Preach" (Jan/Feb) I was captivated by the profound wisdom articulated by a pastor in southern California, Mark Feldmeir. He is not content with preaching self-help, and self-absorbed optimism.

I heartily agree: "The task of the post-modern preacher is to call forth not merely human and social change, but complete transformation through conversion . . . that re-describes ones life in the Kingdom of God."

WILLIAM WESLEY ROUGHTON
Lakeland, Fla.

I had just begun my preparation for Sunday's sermon, one that I would call "Why Preach?" and there in your magazine (Jan/Feb), were five perspectives on this important aspect of ministry. I read each one twice, once for information and the second to reassure myself that I had not missed what I was looking for.

Each article certainly had helpful information. Although I agreed with many of the perspectives, I disagreed with some very basic thoughts including, "Preaching . . . is . . . an act of uncovering, unveiling, revealing the deep mysteries of a God whose footprints in this world . . . are not easily seen . . ." (Sunday Morning Apocalypse). It is my belief and experience that the issue is not God needing/requiring our uncovering but our refusal to daily accept and respond to the very visible footprints of God.

Also, Billy Graham is not a good public speaker; he is, however, a great preacher. Although I understand the need to discover how best to communicate with one's congregation, the greater need is to discover how best to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church is not facing "the demand for a new kind of

preacher, one well trained in the dynamic process of public speaking" ("What Should We Do with the Sermon?") but is faced with the exodus of members who, seeking the Word of God on Sundays, find a poor substitute in "good public speakers."

Finally, I could not find even one reference in any of the articles that mentioned prayer's relationship with preaching. The very best well thought out and creatively presented message on Sunday morning will not shape hearts and save souls like the one prepared on bended knee in the full awareness of the preacher's human limitations, but even more aware of the Holy Spirit's transformational abilities.

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