

We began our Worship of God with a reading from I Corinthians 13. For many of us, these words stimulate images of White satin gowns, Pachelbel's Canon in D, and yards and yards of Tuell. Instead, at Corinth, Paul was responding to a world in conflict, advocating something outside their imagination. In the cacophony Words and sound-bytes, of religions, political parties, voices of authority, Paul advised that we do everything as acts of LOVE, of REAL RECONCILIATION, with Faith & Hope.

Seven years ago, (not 4 score and 7 but) just 7-10 years ago, Green Valley was very different, with Liberals who did not listen to Conservatives, Christians not acknowledging Jews, Catholics who would not worship with Protestants, Lutherans who did not associate with Presbyterians, and Presbyterians who no longer listened to Presbyterians, declaring quite publicly/hurtfully they would not set foot in this Sanctuary again/believing they were not welcome. It was in that ethos that our Church risked claiming a Mission Statement of "Making Christ known through RECONCILIATION. Yet, as the Pastor here and now, having just returned from the every-two year National Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, I would name that "Making Christ known through Reconciliation" is a lot harder than a Mission Statement. We MAKE CHRIST KNOWN through actions and personal relationships of sacrifice, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Jesus returned to his hometown, and all the people doubted, questioning, is not this Mary's son? Meaning: Without a legitimate husband! We know him, his sisters are among us! Surrounded by doubts and challenges to his faith, Jesus could do nothing...

So instead of railing at the crown, instead of complaining, Jesus shifted to sending out the followers as Apostles. Sometimes we need to trust others to advocate for us.

Is this the 12, or is this the 150 who had been accompanying Jesus on the road? No longer is this Jesus teaching alone, the disciples will experience firsthand, what it is to share communion, to listen to another's story, to wrestle with: What do I believe?

40 years ago, I began in ministry. We had graduated the intensive training of Seminary in May, and Ordination came at the beginning of October, but the responsibility of a ministry of reconciliation began here at the start of July when I was just 26 years of age. Honestly, 99.9% of the ministry is never taught in seminary or for the disciples in those three years before the crucifixion. The reality, is you guys are easy... in most churches, this is a lousy job. For 35 years I got up at 4am Sunday mornings after officiating and cleaning up from a Wedding Saturday night; different from singing in the choir or playing the Organ, you have to write your own lyrics and rhythm every week; you work all of the holidays, and people regularly call during dinner or after you have gone to sleep. BUT, Where else in the world before they ask her parents, ask your permission to marry? Where, before the parents or grandparents hold their newborn, the minister holds the baby? When people are at odds,

you listen and help them to hear each other, seeking reconciliation. When their spouse and siblings have all passed, you have the honor to remember them before GOD!

After years of war between Philistines, Judah and Israel, after King Saul had died in War, David searched for a new Capital City that had no history with any of those sides. In the center of the Nation was an ancient city of the Jebusites, as old as Abraham. This city's defenses were stones built like the pyramids, except instead of burial tombs, stone blocks the size of a Communion Table were stacked in concentric circles like a Bull's eye 40 ft tall. There were 4 Gates and no windows, so that when attacked, the people inside could fill the entrances with stones. If an attacker were to get through one wall, they would then be trapped between that wall and the next, and the next and the next. So if there are no doors or windows, how was David to gain access? In the Holy Lands, it depends upon the Tour Guide whether this is the house where Mary had lived, and this was Joseph's Carpenter's shop, or if they were three blocks over. HOWEVER, The Water shaft was reference to the sewers, and there is only one. Outside the Old City of Jerusalem there is entrance to a cave, where you can begin walking upstream in a trickle of water, but as you follow along the water becomes deeper until chest deep, then lowers as you come out inside the City. Now, David and his Army were on the inside and the outside, to reconcile their possession. BUT there is nuance in that story as well: RECONCILIATION requires you get dirty, you get down in the muck and might well drown TRYING to Reconcile.

I share with you, that the highpoint and low of being a Commissioner to the National Gathering of the Church, was encountering colleagues from a lifetime in the Church. You can understand the highs of listening to their successes after you left; the low was meeting up with a man who had made it his purpose to destroy all the work I had done. After 20 years of building trust and resolving problems for that church, his goal in life was my loss, even at the destruction of the church. AND in that moment, I recognized that was years ago, in a different place; and had that not occurred, I would never have come here to share in communion with you. We make Christ known through Reconciliation, love, forgiveness.