

Generosity in Motion ~ September 2, 2020



John the Baptist pointing away from himself and to Christ
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/herlanieship/1429424839/> - Lanie
<http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=56716>

This past Sunday, I was listening to my pastor preach on the gospel appointed for August 30th. It is the scene just following Peter's confession where he exclaims, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God!' In this past Sunday's gospel, and after Jesus' revelation about his Messiahship and discipleship, as is so often the case, he shares these difficult words: *For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done* (Matt 16:27).

Because I am trained in biblical interpretation, theology and the traditions of this church...and even though I do confess Sunday after Sunday with you that I believe in a risen Christ who will '...judge between the living and the dead,' I also know that this reckoning Jesus speaks of entails greater depth of understanding than simply God pointing at this world, you or me and saying, 'You're in!' or 'You're out!' To be sure, this is a popular way of simplifying the

Biblical story or the Christian faith, but it is not the way given us. We are a people weighed down because of 'sin, death and the devil.' And to be sure, God's Word does not always leave us comfortable. But the gospel is proclaimed so as to shatter those bonds and to set us free; to be *in Christ! Reborn! Renewed!*

This is one of the gifts given every week to each of us from God and through the proclamation of our pastors, deacons and lay worship leaders. This week I heard this Word of God proclaimed when my pastor reminded me what was meant by Jesus' words of judgement and chastening. She put it this way:

*A rich life has nothing to do with money. But Jesus assures us that when he comes in glory, there is a kind of repayment that only he can give. Giving one's life by spending it generously lost in Christ's abundant way of love and self-giving **is** the way to find a life that abounds and is eternal.*

I have to tell you that this gospel proclamation meant a great deal to me. And I know because I hear from you that this same preaching -though the words, accent and emphases are not always

the same- *I know* that this same proclamation is part of the myriad of ways that God preserves you. I know it is one of the ways God is making you an instrument of God's preservation and compassion within and for creation.

Thank you for sharing your time, talent and wealth with your congregations, Synod and grace-filled partnerships wherever they may be. You are an instrument of God's blessing. You are God's vessel providing for so much, not least of which the 'gospel medicine' that points away from self and to Christ. Gospel medicine that heals souls, and that draws us closer to God and one another.

Sincerely and In Christ,
Rev. Dean Brown
Assistant to the Bishop