

PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Wednesday, January 23, 2019

7:00 p.m.

Trinity Lutheran Evangelical Church

Gibsonia PA

When I was a sophomore in high school a few decades ago, an acronym that we hear frequently today, was just being introduced, and those three letters are DNA, which stand for deoxyribonucleic acid.

My high school biology teacher and a longtime friend is always amazed at what I remember from her class and occasionally I spout out some other fact from this or that sophomore class. To her credit, this is a tribute to her teaching...not only that I remember a word but can still relate to the topic.

DNA is what makes us, particularly, who we are, something that identifies us specifically; the fundamental and distinctive characteristics or qualities of someone or something, especially when regarded as unchangeable.

I would like to suggest that all of us here this evening share a common DNA when it comes to our faith, and that is the person of Jesus Christ.

St. Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever, quite unchangeable.

And we do not have to subscribe to Ancestry.com to find out who our ancestors in the faith are; we have the Sacred Scripture as well as the lives of women and men who have gone before us and those who are with us today who share the message of the Christ.

Look around you even now...the person sitting next to you, in front and back of you, in the first pew and the last, each one of us carries the unique feature of our baptism in Christ, the characteristic being the model of Christ, the life that we share in Christ. And what is that identity? Certainly not a physical feature, but more importantly a spiritual feature, some characteristic of Christ, whose spirit is in us and makes us who we are in the privilege and practice of our faith. St. Paul

reminds us that while individual gifts may differ, they have been given to us for one reason...to build up the body of Christ.

In the scripture that we just shared from the Gospel of John we heard Jesus say to his audience, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" and, "I ask ...also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one." I'm always amazed when I read these words of Jesus... that he was praying for us...those of us here this evening, and our various church communities...Apparently Jesus knew we needed his prayer to make us one and he promised that....one body, one spirit...that's who we are called to be.

And just how does that happen?

I believe it happens because we share the spiritual DNA of Jesus the Christ. We carry his likeness...in one way or another.

In our local area, it has been pointed out in numerous ways during the aftermath of the tragedy at The Tree of Life Synagogue how the entire community came together for support, care and concern. Muslims, Christians and Jews ...of one heart and mind as we carried our Jewish brothers and sisters in our heart of hearts. Sharing divine DNA, each of us, in his or her own way felt the anguish and the sorrow of the community and responded accordingly. Called to be one with the Spirit as our guide, our oneness gives us new strength, the strength to proclaim the goodness of God, endowed with the "spiritual DNA..." we proclaim the person of Jesus the Christ and the oneness of the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit.

To act as Jesus did, and inspired by the example of Jesus, we take someone in a particular need by the hand---maybe not physically, but with caring and respect. We lift them up from their misery by our attitude. We respect the strength of whatever is their "demon", their distress. ...aware that it is not just yourself, but the forceful stillness, the wordless prayer, the serenity of knowing how to be caring without superiority, how to be equal without faking it, and how to bring good News by just being you...the fellow child of their creator. This interaction is your preaching and prayer in the world today---your contribution every moment of meeting others---because...in the end...we are all one. The address of our place of worship is not the important thing...but perhaps the address of each individual is...Jesus proclaimed the good news that the kingdom, the reign of God had come...not here, not there, ...but among us...

“Repent and believe,” the Scriptures tell us. First, we must repent of our self-centeredness so that we can see the dignity of others, and second, we must believe that God is with us, working miracles in us for the sake of others. It is a strong and empowering message. We must change our lives to see the needs of others.

In this week of Prayer for Christian Unity, it is hearts turned to one another, to the Church down the road, to the church we attend, to the church full of miracles and the church in desperate need of healing.

Unity is possible, but not because of any one of us, but because of all of us, reaching out in love, compassion, interest and concern to another, one other, another church community, my own church community, even to the little church community, the *eccesiola*, which is our family. Each one of us here has within her or himself the ability and the gift to be a source of unity ...let each of us be a little light, to light the way for others and for ourselves, and not to hide the light under a bushel basket but to place that light where it will give light and unity to all who see it.

Let each of us do our part to be one!

I would like to conclude with the lyrics of a hymn that is not in our worship aid this evening...one that sings the song of unity:

Summoned by the God who made us rich in our diversity,

Gathered in the name of Jesus, richer still in unity.

Radiant risen from the water, robed in holiness and light,

male and female in God’s image, God’s delight.

Trust the goodness of creation, trust the Spirit strong within,

Dare to dream the vision promised, sprung from seed of what has been.

Let us bring the gifts that differ, and in splendid varied ways,

Sing a new church into being, one in faith and love and praise.

Karen R. Brink, OSB