

Last Sunday Diane and I worshipped at Christ Church in Dublin, Ireland. I noted this in their bulletin as it was time for Communion: “The Bread which we break is a sharing of the body of Christ, we being many are one body, for we all share in the same Bread.” The invitation to the Table was as follows: “Invited by the vergers (Deacons) the people come forward to receive Communion. Wherever you are from and whatever you believe you are welcome to receive at the Table of the Lord.”

The hymn the choir sang during the serving of Communion was, “Just As I Am Without One Plea...O Lamb of God I come.” The welcome was warm and we were one for a few moments—we will remember.

As Paul writes to Timothy he is encouraged and remembered by Paul. Paul’s words are, “I am reminded...” Timothy was not with Paul, he was off on his own and like any caring father Paul (he sees Timothy as his son) was concerned about how Timothy was doing. He writes to remind Timothy of his faith and asks him to remember the faith of his grandmother, Lois and his mother, Eunice. (This is another Scripture moment when I wish we had more information about Lois and Eunice and their faith.) What we know is that they were strong women of faith and their faith inspired both Timothy and Paul. Now, there were probably far more influential women of faith than have been recorded by a male dominated society...These two were the backbone of Timothy’s faith and upbringing. Paul wants Timothy to remember their faith and to be an example as they were.

Paul also has Timothy remember the power of the Holy Spirit in his life - the power of love and self-discipline. One has said that “Character is what we do when no one is looking.” It is easy to be good/bad when we are with a group. If everyone is working together it is easy to work along side and get the job done. We get caught up with the moment and join hands in the task as we are one. But, what happens when we are alone and there is a job to be done. Do we still give the same amount of energy as when we are with a group? Do we still do our best?

I remember a guest speaker who came from a congregation of about 4,000 in worship each Sunday. I wondered how he would respond to the small number gathered that morning. However, I did not need to be. He gave his very best. He later noted that God had put there those who needed his message that morning and whether it was thousands or one, they needed the very best he had to give. Paul challenges Timothy and us to give our best — to always give the best that we have - love.

Paul reminds us that God gave the very best in Christ. God loves us. The mountains did not tremble or shake. Angels sang to shepherds on a hillside. The only witnesses to that night were the shepherds. God comes to the world in a stable in Bethlehem — love comes. There in Bethlehem, the City of Bread, God gave the very best. We are called to remember.

The story moves beyond Bethlehem some 30 years later when a young man leaves a carpenter’s shop in Nazareth and begins three years of ministry — demonstrating God’s love to the whole world. From the simple carpenter’s shop he goes to the whole world. No one is turned away: not women, children or Gentiles. He eats and drinks with sinners — his hand is extended to all. He came not only for Israel but for the whole world. And, some could not understand why God would love the world beyond Israel. The invitation from God was and is being extended to all who would come. We are asked to remember.

Then, the story moves to what seems to be a tragic ending, Good Friday—a cross. They thought hope had ended that day. Even though Jesus had prepared them for these moments they

had not fully understood — they were not ready. The trial, the crucifixion - tears beyond tears. But, as unexpected as Good Friday there was another day, another morning — Easter and Resurrection. Grace would explode on to the whole world - Love would win - love always wins. A grace came that goes beyond nations and languages. A grace that we must never forget - we are called to remember that God loves the whole world.

As I noted at the beginning of this message, last Sunday Diane and I and the friends we were traveling with shared at the Table of our Lord with others from around the world in worship and Communion. It was a young congregation by Irish standards, begun in 1660 - we were made to feel welcomed, a part of the family. There were people gathered with them from around the world — and the words were the same.... “This do in remembrance of me.”

NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1988