

Controlled by Peace

Sunday School Lesson

Colossians 3:12-17

January 22, 2023

One of my favorite political commentators is a wordsmith named Steve Schmidt. He and Nicole Wallace served on the presidential campaign of John McCain. You could often hear Mr. Schmidt as a commentator on some the cable news program then he went off the rails. You are not likely to hear him anymore because he has called all the major cable news channels corrupt – all of them. CNN, MSNBC and FOX. Now he spends his time writing a newsletter and yes, I subscribe because I find his viewpoints honest, even when I may disagree.

I want to share with you a part of his newsletter from today, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. He sent a video of Dr. King's last speech in Memphis, Tennessee, and then Schmidt adds these words:

It is one of the most important speeches in American history. It was Martin Luther King's last sermon. His hour of death was approaching, and there can be no doubt that he knew his fate as surely as Christ did 2,000 years before. His speech is a prophetic vision. In it, he journeys throughout history to the edge of his own mortality and beyond to declare that he has seen the just society that exists from the mountain top over which he has singularly peered. He led his people to the edge of a new era during which the fulfillment of the American Revolution is at hand. He speaks as a man with ambition, love and hopes for a long life. He expresses his indifference towards all things because he declares his certainty that all of the sacrifices and deprivation will lead to the proverbial promised land, which is what the civil rights movement was about.

When you watch the speech look at the serenity that falls on Dr. King. Look at grace fall upon him as he rises to an altitude of clear vision that no American before or since has reached. Observe his certainty around America's ultimate destiny.

Let us pray

O Holy God,

That you for leading us through another week. Open our hearts to hear your word so we may be faithful disciples who are known by our love for one another.

Amen.

Our Purpose Statement:

To allow the peace of Christ to control us.

Read Colossians 3:12-17

Our lesson began this week with an astonishing story of how a situation got out of control in San Juan Island near Vancouver in 1859. The situation regarding a British pig owner and an American potato farmer. The British pig dug up and ate the farmer's potatoes. The farmer shot the pig and the British citizen demanded restitution. The American sent 69 soldiers to protect the American farmer and the British escalated by

sending a few more. Before it was all over there were 461 Americans with 14 cannons lined up against five British warships with 70 guns and 2,140 soldiers. Fortunately, diplomats were sent in to defuse the situation before anyone was seriously injured.

We are familiar with such stories from the news. A black man, George Floyd used a counterfeit \$20 to pay for something at a convenience store and ended up dying at the hands of the police. A 17 year old teenager was walking back to the home of his father's girlfriend after purchasing a pack of Skittles at a convenience store a few blocks away. He was killed by a neighborhood watch volunteer who mistook him for a criminal. It is amazing how quickly matters can turn violent when trust and a willingness to listen are not present.

The Peace of Christ

We know peace to happen in two different ways. Unfortunately, the most common way to reach peace is for both parties to take up arms and one party score a victory over another party. We see this in war and in various gang activities. Sometimes we do not use weapons of violence, we use economic resources to starve or to hurt. In sports, we take up different kinds of weapons such as footballs, basketballs or hockey putts.

But there is a difference kind of peace we call the peace of Christ and it is found through reconciliation and restoration. It comes from our understanding of the love of God and the call to love our neighbor as ourselves. For Christians, it should be our primary understanding of achieving peace. It calls for justice and grace. It requires a skill known as peacemaking and it is a necessary part of justice work. It is the peace referred to in the Epistle to the church at Colossae. We are urged to put aside our hot tempers and put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. We are required to be tolerant with each other and to forgive.

Last year I was mentoring a deputy in the sheriff's department who want to become a licensed Local Pastor. We were talking about a man who was pulled over for not using his blinker as he left the Walmart parking lot. The policeman had also noted he and his wife had not yet put on their seatbelts. So now he has three tickets to pay which apparently totaled more than the man made in one week. The deputy sheriff shook his head and made this statement. He said law enforcement gives you two weapons, your gun and your pencil. He said good police know when and when not to use them.

It always breaks my heart when we escalate disagreements to the point that some gets hurt. That is happening in many churches through the process of disaffiliation as some church council vote to pursue the process when it is not clear that the votes are there to leave. Relationships are damaged and they will not be mended without forgiveness and reconciliation. It is hard work and it is only successful if everyone puts aside their pride and puts Christ first.

Closing prayer: We have many challenges facing our world and it is difficult to solve real problems without allowing power, money, and special interests to get in the way. Teach us to listen and to hear. Help us seek to love all your children. Amen.