

October 2, 2016

2 Timothy 1:1-14

World Communion

This Sunday is designated as World Communion Sunday. It is an opportunity to acknowledge that the "Jesus movement" could not be contained in that small, Middle Eastern region, but has spread globally.

But, rather than being labeled "World-wide Christian Sunday", it is called "World Communion" Sunday. For church folk, what first comes to mind is the sacrament - the bread and the wine - which we have been called to "do in remembrance" of Jesus' death and resurrection. "Communion", however, also means "an act or instance of sharing".

We have been thinking about division and unity for the last month, so the question "sharing what?" comes to mind. What does the world-wide church have in common? What is it that we share? Certainly, the sacrament is one thing. And, with that, is faith in Jesus Christ. The text from 2 Timothy sheds more light on this question.

Paul is writing to Timothy, a young man whom Paul is mentoring in the ministry. He begins this letter with words of encouragement and a reminder that Timothy needs to "keep alive the gift that God gave you" - the gift of faith and Timothy's calling.

Paul defines the "Good News", which Timothy is to have faith in and to shamelessly proclaim, in vss. 9-10. And it is this, the Good News, which we hold in common with believers around the world.

On reading these verses, I was particularly struck by the end of verse 10 as found in the Good News translation. He (Jesus Christ) has ended the power of death and through the gospel has revealed immortal life. In particular, the words ended the power of death, stand out. We so often speak of Christ's victory over death; and, yet, we know that people really do die. So, where's the victory?

Paul is describing it for Timothy. Death is, indeed, a reality. But the power of death has been overcome. So much of our lives are controlled by our fear of and/or denial of death. We hold so tightly to life that we don't live. We distract ourselves with power, possessions and prestige so we don't have to think about our physical mortality.

But, through faith in Christ and his promise of new life, we don't need to pull back into cocoons. Instead, we are freed to open ourselves to others - to be in true "communion" with them. We have the chance to enjoy the difference and diversity God has embedded in this world. We can let go of our "death grip" on our resources, and learn to offer assistance to those with less. We can fight for equality and justice with confidence that when others are doing better, we are doing better, too. We are, after all, all in this together.

Pastor Ron