

Greetings in the Holy name of Jesus,

SCRIPTURE:

Galatians 2:20 (CEB) – Larger reading: Galatians 2:11-21

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in my body, I live by faith, indeed, by the faithfulness of God’s Son, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

STORY:

“Meekness does not assert itself because it has something better to assert,” writes a contemporary. “A man comes into his own not by slaying rivals but by slaying himself.”

OBSERVATION:

It is no secret that I love to tell stories. In fact, one of our leaders stated that I have “a story for every situation and for every occasion.” I love to hear a good story. Often it is the stories that people remember long after the sermon has faded away. When pressed I simply shared that “I’m just following the example of Jesus.” I love the stories that Jesus told, especially the parables ... a simple lesson told in a direct and simple way ... something that I could understand and relate to... something that I can remember. Therefore, when I come across a good modern day parable I have to share it ...

THE QUILT – author unknown

“As I faced my Maker at the last judgment, I knelt before the Lord along with all the other souls. Before each of us laid our lives like the squares of a quilt in many piles. An Angel sat before each of us sewing our quilt squares together into a tapestry that is our life. But as my angel took each piece of cloth off the pile, I noticed how ragged and empty each of my squares was. They were filled with giant holes. Each square was labeled with a part of my life that had been difficult, the challenges and temptations I was faced with in everyday life. I saw hardships that I endured, which were the largest holes of all. I glanced around me. Nobody else had such squares. Other than a tiny hole here and there, the other tapestries were filled with rich color and the bright hues of worldly fortune. I gazed upon my own life and was disheartened. My angel was sewing the ragged pieces of cloth together, threadbare and empty, like binding air.

“Finally the time came when each life was to be displayed, held up to the light, the scrutiny of truth. The others rose, each in turn, holding up their tapestries. So filled their lives had been. My angel looked upon me, and nodded for me to rise. My gaze dropped to the ground in shame. I hadn't had all the earthly fortunes. I had love in my life, and laughter. But there had also been trials of illness, and death, and false accusations that took from me my world as I knew it. I had to start over many times. I often struggled with the temptation to quit, only to somehow muster the strength to pick up and begin again. I spent many nights on my knees in prayer, asking for help and guidance in my life. I had often been held up to ridicule, which I endured painfully, each time offering it up to the Father in hopes that I would not melt within my skin beneath the judgmental gaze of those who unfairly judged me. And now, I had to face the truth. My life was what it was, and I had to accept it for what it was.

“I rose and slowly lifted the combined squares of my life to the light. An awe-filled gasp filled the air. I gazed around at the others who stared at me with wide eyes. Then, I looked upon the tapestry before me. Light flooded the many holes, creating an image, the face of Christ. Then our Lord stood before me, with warmth and love in His eyes. He said, ‘Every time you gave over your life to Me, it became My life, My hardships, and My struggles. Each point of light in your life is when you stepped aside and let Me shine through, until there was more of Me than there was of you.’

“May all our quilts be threadbare and worn, allowing Christ to shine through.”

QUOTE:

Despite our efforts to keep him out, God intrudes. The life of Jesus is bracketed by two impossibilities: "a virgin's womb and an empty tomb". Jesus entered our world through a door marked, "No Entrance" and left through a door marked "No Exit." --Peter Larson

PRAYER:

Gracious and merciful God, too often we are just full of ourselves. We think that we are more important than we really are. Or, just the reverse, we see ourselves as less than we really are. We look upon ourselves and think, “I’m not important. I’m just taking up space.” It is in those moments that we become keenly aware of our need for you to live in and through us. Help us to get out of the way so that you can shine through. In the name of the one who shines always, Jesus Christ. Amen.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
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In-person worship begins this Sunday at 10:30. The sermon will be: “Cities of Refuge” – Joshua 20:1-6.