

Devotion Sacred/Holy Places April 30, 2020

Greeting

Let us pray: Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as the Scriptures are read, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen

Scripture: Acts 17:22-25; Exodus 3:2-5; Acts 7:33; Joshua 5:13-15

Encyclopedia.com definition for sacred or holy spaces “is a defined place, a space distinguished from other spaces. Sacred means holy or spiritual.”

American historian of religions, Jonathan Z. Smith has a helpful metaphor of sacred space: it is as a focusing lens. A sacred place focuses attention on the forms, objects, and actions in it and reveals them as bearers of religious meaning.”

An article in Christianity Today by Rev Jeff Christopherson, a church planter, author and missiologist at the Send Institute, an evangelism think tank said: “Any space can, and does, become sacred when it’s animated by God’s presence and activity through the lives of a submitted people.”

Do we believe God is confined to a place? Where do we feel God’s presence? At the church building where we worship together-right? What about my dining room table where our live worship on Sunday takes place or right now during our devotional time?” Pastor Christopherson said any space can and does become sacred.

First Presbyterian Church in Naples Fl went through a huge building project about 20 years ago. They met on Sunday mornings across the street at the Jr. High, in the cafeteria. Did that make the cafeteria a sacred place, but only on Sunday mornings at 10:00? I believe it was a sacred space every day because God was there with the students, the teachers, the lunch-room staff and volunteers. Bruce and I were volunteer proctors at lunch time. We were there to make sure the students behaved! We also sat with students who were lonely, having a rough day, or even a great day. The first day we discovered what the cafeteria looked like at the end of lunch period. Trash everywhere. Within two weeks order was established. Loving the children was the focus.

There was a corner at the school where a group of students crossed the street to go into town just two blocks from the school. This happened when the students arrived at school in the morning which was not allowed. Bruce saw what was happening and decided to be the corner proctor. He engaged the kids in conversation and within a few weeks that corner became crowded with about 30-40 students laughing and joking with him. Bruce showed the young people that they were loved and cared about. He was not preaching to them, he was showing them, through his words and actions the love of Christ. I would call that a sacred place.

How would you define a sacred space? What is the most important component that makes our church building a sacred space? Remembering Paul’s speech in chapter 17:24; “The God who

made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands." We believe God is everywhere, always with us. We do not need to go to church to pray or worship God. It is one way we do these things, but we pray at home, in a hospital room, outside don't we.

Exodus 3:4-5, "When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, Moses! Moses! And Moses said, Here I am. Do not come any closer God said, "Take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy ground." God's presence was in the burning bush.

Here we are in 2020 and if asked what is a holy/sacred space we might hear a variety of places: Jerusalem is called the Holy City, cathedrals, small country churches, I mentioned hospitals and my dining room table, under a tree (one of my favorite places to pray) or in a garden.

As Christians we put a specific definition on sacred spaces. We might simply say it is where God is moving through the lives of the people gathered. Therefore, a building does not need to be a place to worship. Just as we gather online the spaces we occupy, the message and prayers I say at my dining room table can be sacred places. I am eternally grateful for this and thank God for this opportunity.

Closing remarks

Blessing

May the grace of Christ attend you, the love of God surround you, and the Holy Spirit keep you, now and forever. Amen

-Pastor Linda