

**Lectionary 12 Year A 2020**  
**June 21, 2020**  
**Sermon**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we enter more fully into these summer months, having experienced the first official day of summer on Saturday, we also enter into a new time in the church year. This time after Pentecost and after Holy Trinity Sunday is called “Ordinary Time” and it will last almost until Advent in December. This “Green Season”—called such because of the color of the paraments on the altar, is a long one each year. And it’s long not just because of the length of time that this season lasts, but it also *feels* like a long time because we focus on some challenging teachings and words from Jesus in this season. That is the purpose of this “Ordinary Time,” to hear in God’s Word the ways that Christ instructs us to live the gospel message.

We’ve been eased into this season of instruction, beginning with Pentecost, when God promised us the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that we might have the courage to share God’s love and tell our story of faith. Then, two weeks ago on Trinity Sunday, we remembered that God is manifest as Father Son and Spirit so that we might be strengthened in relationship with God—who exists in relationship. And finally last Sunday, as we began the season of Ordinary Time, we heard as the disciples, and by extension, ourselves, were sent out to gather the lost, to make disciples of all nations, and to allow God to speak through them.

We know that our salvation has been assured, that nothing we do can separate us from God’s love, and we have been equipped and strengthened by God for the work ahead. God has spent three weeks preparing us to hear what it means to live as disciples in the world. And now it’s time for some tough teachings.

Today we hear that Jesus didn’t come to bring peace, but rather a sword. He says that he has come to set people against one another. “Why?,” we might ask. Because the message of Jesus—a message of radical love and grace and mercy—is a message that not everyone will accept. Jesus doesn’t want people to hate one another, but he explains that this is the natural consequence of the gospel he has been called to proclaim.

You see, some people really like to have status and reputation. Some people find value in having things that others cannot. Some people enjoy reaping the benefits of seeds they did not sow.

And so, when Jesus proclaims a message of radical love and inclusion, these people get upset. Because this is a message that includes *all* people, and that proclaims *all* people as beloved children of God—white people and people of color; protestors, rioters, police and even white supremacists; Republicans and Democrats; straight people and gay, transgender and questioning people; Americans and enemies of America; rich and poor people; the educated and uneducated; those who are able-bodied and minded and those with disabilities; married people, single people and divorced; adults and children; the selfish and selfless. And some of us may not want all those people included in God’s love and God’s mission. We’d rather have something from God that others cannot have, because then it feels like we’re the special, chosen ones. And so whole churches have been built on exclusion, because people don’t want to hear that every person on this earth is special and chosen and loved by God. But the truth is that God *does* love us all, and God and wants to include all of us in the life of the church and hear the diverse voices of the body of Christ.

Our country has been built on these inequalities and exclusions. Right now, our nation is facing a crisis as people have become fed up with the racism that is built into the systems of power in our country. People of color do not enjoy the same freedoms and privileges as we do, even simple things like not being followed through a store while shopping. And for years, we have been content to ignore the voices crying out for justice. But God calls us to confront the forces of this nation that seek to oppress and dehumanize people of color, because God loves each and every person on this earth, without exception. And when one member of the body of Christ is in pain, the whole body suffers.

Our reading from Romans today begins, “Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means!” God has empowered us with the ability to change the way we act and view the world. God has equipped us with the Holy Spirit to guide us to work for the transformation of our own minds and of the world around us. We may be tired of hearing about racism, and we may think that we’ve done all we need to do in order to be inclusive of *all* of God’s children, but there is still a *long* way to go.

Every person on this earth is special and beloved by God. It’s time that we, as Christians, speak up so that our world can better reflect God’s radical love for all people, and so that *all* people are allowed to live the abundant life that God promises.

It won’t be easy. But God has prepared us for discipleship, and Christ gives us hope. Jesus tells us not to fear. We have received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. We have received the breath of God to sustain us and give us courage.

We shall begin by proclaiming that each and every person in this world has been given a special name. God calls each and every one of us Child of God. And even though it’s the same name that everyone else has received, it is still special.

My daughter used to have a disc of silly songs by the author Sandra Boynton when she was a toddler, and one of my favorite ones is called, “Fifteen Animals”. Each animal has a special name. It goes like this: (play song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIFPzFox2c8>)

I really like animals, I like them a lot  
Fifteen animals is what I've got  
I've got fifteen animals,  
          they're friendly and tame  
And I've given each one a special name:

I've got a cat named Bob  
And a dog named Bob  
And two fish called Bob and Bob  
Then there's Bob, my hamster,  
          and Bob, my horse  
And my piglet, known as Bob,  
          of course

Yeah, I really like animals,  
          I like them a lot  
Fifteen animals is what I've got  
I've got fifteen animals,  
          they're friendly and tame  
And I've given each one a special name:

Well, there's my rabbit, Bob  
And his bunny wife, Bob  
And their kids, Bob, Bob, and Bob  
There's Bob the mouse  
And Bob the bird  
And my turtle  
Simon James Alexander  
          Ragsdale the Third.

It may be a silly song, but every single animal is loved by the owner, even if they all have the same name. The same is true with God. Each and every person in this world has been given a special name by God. We are all named Child of God, and God loves us all the same. We don’t

have to earn a good reputation or exclude anyone in order for God to love us. We don't have to fear that in giving voice to the voiceless and working for justice for the oppressed, we will somehow become less special. God loves us all, and God's abundant love is more than enough for everyone. Thanks be to God. Amen.