

Nokesville UMC Sunday Worship [Father's Day]

June 20, 2021

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Knowing Father through father

2 Corinthians 6:4-10

(1)

The Apostle Paul wrote the first epistle to the Corinthians when he was in Ephesus. And Paul called Titus, gave the letter to him, and sent him to Corinth with the letter. Paul asked him on another mission, which was to observe the current situation of the Corinthian faith community and report back. Paul waited for Titus in Ephesus, but his return was delayed again and again. What was worse, a riot arose in Ephesus, so Paul had to move to Macedonia. Finally, Paul met Titus there and heard of the situation of the Corinthian church. Titus gave him good news. The Corinthian believers welcomed his letter, repented according to Paul's exhortation, and longed for his visitation to Corinth.

However, there was also bad news in the community. False apostles and deceitful workers appeared in the faith community and claimed that they are apostles of Christ. They caused confusion, including doubt about Paul's apostolate—because he was not one of the twelve disciples of Jesus—and misguided the believers. Some of the believers began to believe and follow them. Thus, Paul felt the necessity to vindicate his apostolic ministry to (1) strengthen the faithful majority in the Corinthian faith community, (2) encourage them to contribute to the financial needs of other believers in other communities, and (3) offer the doubtful minority in Corinth another opportunity to repent. Thus, Paul wrote another epistle to the Corinthian believers with such vindications, which is called the second epistle to the Corinthians.

(2)

According to the Lectionary schedule, we read 2 Corinthians 6:4-10. Of his vindications, chapter six corresponds to his first vindication—strengthen the faithful majority in the church. Paul called them "Servants of God." To become true servants of God, the Corinthian believers earnestly and faithfully worked for God and served their neighbors. Thus, Paul said, "no fault may be found with our ministry" (v. 3). Nevertheless, not everyone welcomed the faith community. Some expressed their hostility to Jesus's believers. But for the sake of Jesus, they accepted great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, and hunger (vv. 4-5). In the midst of such hardship and suffering, they preserved "purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech and the power of God" (vv. 6-7). No matter what the world and the city of Corinth said to the faith community—either honor or dishonor, good reputation or bad reputation—the believers did what they learned as servants of God and what the Spirit told them to do. People considered them impostors, but they were truthful men. People considered them unknown, but they

were well known; dying but alive; punished but not killed; sorrowful but rejoicing; poor but rich; having nothing but possessing everything (vv. 8b-10).

(3)

This was the power of the early church and the early Christians in the first century. And such features—well, I prefer to say “spiritual DNA” of the early church and the early Christians—have been handed over to all churches and Christians all around the world since the first church on earth was born...up to today...to Nokesville UMC. All ministries that we have done so far and that we will resume sooner or later in the post pandemic era are our faithful response to Jesus’s call and to becoming servants of God in Nokesville and our neighboring communities. They are not to gain a positive reputation from our neighbors or to become a big congregation. True servants of God do not waver according to reputation or popularity. We won’t waver due to these things. It only matters whether we are truly in God, whether we honestly respond to God’s call, whether we faithfully care for each other, whether we persistently practice ministries, and whether we make other disciples of Jesus Christ.

(4)

Celebrating Father’s Day this year, I want to exhort fathers in our congregation. God gave us a great gift—a family—as well as great ministries—loving, caring, and supporting family members. Do you do your best in your ministries? Even though we leave much to be desired, and we make a lot of mistakes as fathers, God knows—and your family knows—your work, love, dedication, and sacrifice for your family. You deserve to be praised!

By the way, God also gives you another ministry—He wants your family members to know Him through you. Traditionally, God is called “Father.” And you are also called “father,” so that your children no matter if they are grown up or still dependent, they first came to know God through you—calling you father. So, let me ask you again, do you do your best in your ministry? It is never too late! Through you, fathers, let your children come to know who God is. Today is Father’s Day! I hope you enjoy and have a joyful and meaningful day with your family members. In addition, may God and His grace and mercy be with fathers who sent their fathers to eternal homes. Amen.