

It is such a joy to be with you. I love your pastor and her husband so much. I was part of their coming together in marriage, and I have had so much fun with them through the years and continue to do so.

And I love the Kona congregation. I have followed your mission and ministry for 22 years, preaching here once in a while. The last time I preached here was on zoom during the covid pandemic. But today I get to be with you in person, face to face and I give thanks to God.

The scripture text began, “For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all....so if anyone is in Christ ;, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away, see, everything has become new.....for in Christ God was reconciling the world to God, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us...so we are ambassadors for Christ...”.

And there is more...but we already heard it read aloud.

In September I was in Karlsruhe, Germany, for the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches. The 1st Assembly was in 1948 right after WW 2. This assembly had a theme, “Christ’s Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity.” That theme comes from this passage in second Corinthians.

When the apostle Paul was writing the Christians in Corinth it was a time of division. They were following different leaders. He wanted unity, yet they were contentious and struggling among themselves.

He wanted them to understand that in Christ they were a new creation. He wanted them to be open to reconciliation with God, including reconciliation between himself and the Corinthians. Reconciliation with others is one of the ways to honor God. Because we worship the God who reconciles us through Christ we show our devotion by participating in the message and reality of reconciliation. To do so, we must keep our hearts open.

2000years later we are in a time of division in our nation, our world, and in the Church. But the love of Christ is still urging us on...to BE disciples...for the transformation of the world.

And for us today I want to say that the love of Christ compels us...to recommit to our calling on a Sunday that our pastor has returned from a jurisdictional conference to lead us into the future.

So, I will say the love of Christ compels us

-to be justice seeking friends
-to be peacemakers for life
-to become more perfect in love of God and neighbor
-to help reduce suffering in the world
-to move toward unity in our diversity
-to be stewards of creation
ecology and Eucharist

The love of Christ compels us to open our hearts and be peacemakers for life and to become justice seeking friends. Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said, “woe to those who neglect justice and the love of God.” As he wept, he said, “if you had only on this day recognized the things that are for peace.”

My friend Rachel Lampard from the British Methodist Conference love to speak of “oceans of justice.” She reminds us that we can act with holiness and hope, swimming in oceans of justice and love. She says it is important to show justice in human relationships. That’s why I call it being justice seeking friends. We are to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. With so many children living in poverty, so many refugees....and many people dying as they cross borders looking for a place to be and call home....with water scarcity affecting 4 in 10 people and climate change making rainfall more variable and people facing persecution, torture and death because of their beliefs...we need....”oceans of justice.”

And the love of Christ compels us to help reduce suffering in the world. In the WCC we speak of going to the places of woundedness in the world and standing in solidarity with those in need. We can reach out to our neighbors in hospitality ...just as the men walking to Emmaus one day reached out to the stranger walking beside them...invited him to dinner....and met the risen Lord...Jesus the Christ... face to face. When we show hospitality and open ourselves to one another and eat

together, breaking bread together, and are truly present with one another, then we see the face of Christ and are blessed.

And the love of Christ compels us to be stewards of creation...as our earth home is at risk for all of us...Every 90 seconds a child dies because of a water related disease and 2 million people die each year because of a lack of safe water, sanitation or hygiene.

And the love of Christ compels us to become more perfect loving God and our neighbors. Methodist people told together holiness and justice. We can speak of holiness as “wholeness”.. That is being the best person you can be, being free of all that inhibits your growth as a human being, being healed and complete...fully human, fully alive, full open to God and the world...And holiness is resilience...the power to bounce back when knocked down by failure, illness, disappointment, tragedy, or suffering...resilient, wholeness, spiritual fitness are ways of speaking of holiness...and when we see the sacredness in creation because God loves it,...we love our neighbors and seek justice for them...and we find a closeness with God drawing us nearer to God and we grow in holiness...and we become more perfect in love. I had a teacher one time tell me I would spend the rest of my life learning what it means to love and how to love.

So Christ’s love urges us on...so that the inner and outer manifestation of God’s love takes shape...and we can live in gratitude for God’s grace in our lives.

So today, let us join hands and pray for every city, town and village and all who live in them...for the good of the earth and of creation, which God has given us, for the wisdom and will to conserve it...for the aged, the infirmed, for the widows and orphans, the sick and suffering...for the poor and the oppressed, for the unemployed, the destitute, for the prisoners and the captives...for all those who care for them...for the deliverance from all danger, violence, and degradation... let us commend ourselves to a life of love and compassion, choosing to open our hearts and become peacemakers and justice seeking friends and steward of creation ...becoming more perfect in love...for the love of Christ compels us...urges us on...and we will be blessed.