

Answering the Call

Loving God, help us to hear You speaking into our hearts this day so that Your love might help us live the abundant life You have promised. And assist us we pray – that the words of my mouth and the mediations of all our hearts are pleasing to You – our Healer, our Liberator, our Redeemer. AMEN.

The Moravian tradition has very few ‘special Sundays’ – Sundays where we remember specific events or people. Unlike some other faith traditions, Moravians typically are pretty low key – more concerned about living in community than highlighting any individual.

So, why do we highlight Jan Hus? After all, he wasn’t even Moravian. What is it about this individual that more than 600 years after his death – Moravians want to focus attention on him? Why do Moravians look to trace our spiritual roots to someone who remains relatively unknown to many people in our world?

Perhaps it is because Hus was a person who stood against some of the abuses of power that were happening in the church – as he was a strong opponent to the sale of indulgences. As indulgences were touted as a way for people to buy their way out of trouble – a way to buy their way into good standing with God.

Perhaps it is because Hus was a person who thought that people should be able to understand what was happening in a worship service. He was a proponent of having the words spoken by the priest in the language of the people – desiring that God be made accessible to all.

Or perhaps it is because Hus was a person who wanted to live out the idea of the ‘priesthood’ of all believers – where everyone was offered the bread and wine as part of Holy Communion – removing some of the privilege from those ordained as priests.

In the end, Hus was a radical reformer – declared a heretic – put on trial and when he refused to recant . . . he was burned at the stake.

So why do Moravians remember this man?

By declaring that God's grace wasn't for sale to those wealthy enough to afford it – Hus declared that God's grace is for all.

By preaching and teaching in the Czech language – the language of the people – Hus declared that a person didn't need to be part of a secret society or part of a special in-group to experience God.

By administering communion in both kinds – bread and wine – to all gathered – Hus declared that all people are equal . . . that all people are worthy . . . that all people are fully children of God.

You see, much of what we take for granted today was not part of the church experience for those living in the 15th century. His ideas were literally revolutionary in his time – resulting in him needing to be stopped at any cost. And when he had a change to save himself – he refused to recant . . . he refused as an ordained priest to continue to be part of a corrupt and broken system.

And while we could simply stop there – give thanks for his willingness to stand against the corruption of what God intends for people – I believe that we are called to see where we might need to take up the baton he handed on to those who followed him.

For 600 years have passed but not all that much has changed in our world. There are still those who would like to control what people believe and how people live through the use of fear, threats, and terror.

600 years ago – it might have been the power of the institutional church that put heavy demands on people. Demands that were backed up with threats of losing God's grace – being condemned to darkness; separation; and torment.

Today – the threats might not come from the same source, but there are still heavy demands on people. Demands to go with the flow – to allow things like nationalism and consumerism to go on – so that the privileged can live out quiet lives.

Yet, the idea of living quiet lives the idea of keeping our heads down – looking away from injustice and abuse – is not the Way for followers of Jesus.

Jesus declares:

“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and the sake of the gospel, will save it.” (Mark 8:34-35)

With these words, Jesus is giving all people – including us – a heads up. He is telling us that following in the footsteps of a revolutionary is not for the ‘weak of heart’. It takes courage it takes determination it takes endurance.

For you see – Jan Hus tried to live out Jesus’ call in his own life. He decided that helping others experience God was more important than his own comfort and success. The cross that Hus took up – was the cross to fight against the things that were putting barriers between the people and God. In his time – this included trying to break down the human made barriers that put the ordained clergy on a pedestal because they were closer to God.

And that call is still as valid, as real, as important for us today. Jesus is calling each of us to do something totally against what our culture tells us – to decide to live in a way totally different than the way our culture tells us is the right way, the best way to live.

Jesus is calling to each of us to deny ourselves to take up our own cross and follow Jesus into a world that desperately needs LOVE!

Sometimes that call is like a quiet whisper a gentle nudge when we are encountering another person. It might be a kind word of encouragement. It might be the offer to spend some time listening. It might be the willingness to throw around a ball or go for an evening stroll around the neighbourhood.

The gentle nudge is often just a way for us to break with our routines – to be open to disruptions in our schedules . . . that will bring a sense of hope; a feeling of dignity; an experience of joy to someone else. Although, if we are honest with ourselves – our offer gives us a spark of life as well.

Sometimes that call is not so quiet or gentle. Sometimes we are called to action because of the harm caused when we witness injustice – it might be the way someone is being treated in the workplace; it might be the way someone is being bullied on the playground; it might be the way someone is being dismissed or ignored in the classroom or mall. While, speaking up is never easy . . . we know that remaining silent is not the Way of Jesus – so we are nudged by God to get involved.

And sometimes that call requires us to get involved in working towards changing the systems that are harming ourselves and others. It might mean actually voting with our conscious and even assisting getting the message out to others. It might mean letting those in power and authority know that change is needed.

The reality that Jan Hus knew was that the call of Jesus can only be answered fully if we are willing to – see everything through the lenses of love; seeing with the eyes of God . . . hear everything through the filter of love; hearing with the ears of God . . . experience everything through the flow of love; feeling with the heart of God.

This is what the church in Corinth is being told in today's passage. When the people are told:

“For the message about the cross is foolishness . . . Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.” (1Corinthians 1: 18, 22-23)

God is declaring that LOVE changes everything. For the Cross is the ultimate display of LOVE – but without being open to that Love it is impossible to accept and embrace the reality.

The wisdom of the world declares – look out for yourself – put yourself first. The wisdom of God – Jesus – declares that putting yourself first results in creating a barrier for God's love to flow into us and through us.

So, the choice is ours to make. Will we be like Jan Hus who lived a life trying to remove barriers in order to experience God's love as fully as possible in his life so that God's love could flow into the world?

Or will we live using the wisdom of the world – where we might gain everything the world thinks we should desire wealth, power, influence, fame yet fail to experience the one thing that brings abundant life – God's LOVE.

You see – here's the catch. To fully experience God's love requires that we open ourselves to the disruption that God's love brings – putting others first; labouring to bring justice and peace to our world; and living content allowing us to share with others.

The beautiful thing about LOVE – God's love – is that it is always an invitation for us to enter into never a command to obey.

May we be people who accept the invitation and by being bearers of love become people who change our world.

AMEN.