

Proper 18, Year A

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Exodus 12:1-14

Psalm 149

Romans 13:8-14

Matthew 18:15-20

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Good morning everyone.  
I want to welcome you all to St. Anne's,  
especially if you are an out-of-town guest  
seeking refuge from Hurricane Irma.

Whatever brings you here, please know  
that you are welcome and loved,  
and we are glad to have you with us  
as we worship, pray,  
and prepare for this storm.

\* \* \*

Over in our Ministry Center  
we are housing about 30 health care workers.  
These are mostly the same folks  
who came to us during Hurricane Matthew.

They arrived from Brunswick on Friday  
along with their elderly patients  
who are being housed at Maple Court  
and the Rehab Center on 20th & Tift.

Their plan was to get away from Hurricane Irma,  
but now it seems all of us are directly in its path.

At any rate, they are using our Ministry Center  
as a home base to rest, shower, and sleep  
when they aren't on duty taking care of their patients.

At this time they have everything they need.  
We will let you know if that changes.

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Of all the readings we could have had today,  
I find it interesting that we get this story from Exodus.  
**This is the Passover of the Lord.**

You could say it's the original  
disaster preparedness plan.

By the time we get to this story in Exodus,  
the people of Israel  
have been enslaved in Egypt  
for generations.

Moses has gone to Pharaoh and said,  
"Let my people go,"  
but Pharaoh will not budge.

For that reason  
God has sent plague after plague,  
and the worst is about to happen.  
Every firstborn son in Egypt is about to die.

So God says to the Israelites:

"On this night,  
take a lamb,  
kill it,  
eat it,  
and smear its blood  
over your doorposts.

Do not wait.  
Do not dally.  
Do not procrastinate.

For on this night,  
I will come and strike down  
all the firstborn sons  
of the houses of Egypt.

The blood on your doors  
will be a sign for you,  
and when I see it  
I will pass over your homes  
as I destroy all the rest."

Thus saith the Lord.

**This is the Passover of the Lord,**  
and it's about as Old Testament as it gets.

It is life for life.  
It is blood for blood.  
To spare the life of their household,  
another life—the life of a lamb—  
had to pay the price.

On days like today,  
and at times such as these,  
it is tempting to wonder  
if it could still work that way.

If we just knew the right formula,  
if we just had  
the right instructions,  
the right words,  
the right plan—  
if we just had the right blood to paint over our doors—  
then maybe God might pass us over  
and spare us from the hurricanes,  
the floods,  
the tempests,  
and the fear.

But it doesn't work that way.  
Not anymore.

It doesn't work that way because  
our life is about something different now.

\* \* \*

Every Easter you and I come to this place,  
and we remember not just the Passover,  
but the greatest Passover.

Every Easter—  
and, for that matter, every Sunday—  
we remember how  
two-thousand-and-something years ago,  
life was given for life,  
blood was given for blood.

We remember that fateful day when  
instead of taking our firstborn sons,  
God turned it all upside down  
and he gave his firstborn Son . . .

to spare us,  
to save us,  
to show us the way.

On that Passover,  
God gave us everything he has,  
and ever since then,  
our perspectives are changed,  
our priorities are changed,  
and our life is about something different.

\* \* \*

This past week in our staff meeting  
we found ourselves reading the story  
of when Mary goes to Jesus,  
breaks open her jar of costly perfume,  
and pours it all over his feet  
in an act of wasteful, extravagant love.

Judas sees this and is appalled.  
“This is absurd!” he says.  
“She is wasting it!  
We should save it,  
and sell it,  
and dole out the money  
in drips and drabs.”

But Jesus knows the Passover that is about to come.  
Jesus knows that the time for drips and drabs is over.  
Jesus knows that the time for stinginess and self-motivation has come and gone.

Jesus knows the he is about to go to the cross  
and that he is about to give nothing less  
than the fullness of his own self with  
utter wastefulness,  
utter sacrifice,  
utter extravagance,  
utter love for the sake of us all.

“No,” he says. “Let her do it.”  
As Rev. Ellen said during our staff meeting,  
“The time for drips and drabs is over.  
The time for extravagance and love is here.”

\* \* \*

The truth is,  
I do not know what this hurricane will bring.  
I do not know whom it will pass over and whom it will not.  
I do not know how our friends in Florida will fare.  
I do not know what will happen to us.

But I do know this.

I know that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and that he is the captain  
and the Lord  
and the lover of our souls.

I know that the era of stinginess has long been over.  
I know that the era of extravagant love is here.  
I know that as we make our way through this,  
there is only one thing that matters,  
and that is to love,  
and to help,  
and to pour ourselves out for others  
with extravagance and love,  
for that is what has been done for us.

\* \* \*

They say that hurricanes like Harvey and Irma  
“equalize” us and make us all the same.  
We’ve seen this in the news footage  
of all the people helping one another . . .  
black, brown, and white,  
rich, middle class, and poor.

But, O Christian, don’t you know?  
Don’t you know that we were equalized long ago?  
The blood of the Lamb has rescued us all.  
The blood of the Lamb has made us one.  
God give us the courage to act that way  
and to love others with the same selfless abandon.

The time for drips and drabs is over.  
The time for extravagance and love is here.

**This is the Passover of the Lord.**

Amen.