

Sermon for 9 October 2022 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Scriptures: Jeremiah 29:1,4-7; Psalter (*Insert:Alternate leader and **people***)
Psalm 66:1-12; 2 Timothy 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19

“Riches”

Once again, in these last weeks of the church year, we find our Bible readings packed with themes going in many directions.

The Jeremiah reading, traditionally understood largely as a series of letters by the prophet to those leaders of Israel who were taken away by their Babylonian conquerors to live, not as slaves, but free to keep their family connections intact and to practice what they could, without a temple, of their religion, sent as a word from the Lord. He says to settle in and work for the good of the overall society. It has stood over the generations as a position for both Jews and Christians.

Wherever you are, work for the general benefit of all, not giving up your standards or uniqueness, but being constructive members where you are.

Certainly this is a strong word for us at this moment. May God help us to take it seriously as everything seems to change around us.

Psalm 66 is a beautiful call to worship God in all reality: In nature, in society, in individual uniqueness, and certainly in all the global concerns that are more obvious with every storm and every conflict of arms, as well in every sign of interconnectedness from food to money, internet to women’s rights, racial divisions to the unity of the atomic particles and the stars and seasons. It is a call to honor the oneness of love in all things.

Second Timothy adds to the list of good advice the foundation principles of our faith, from being clear who Jesus was, to expecting suffering as a basic ingredient of faithful living, to resurrection beyond death, to being clear but respectful towards one another, honoring the group nature of Jesus’ life within and among us.

In the Luke reading, the story of Jesus and the lepers not only inspires us to be involved in healing as members of Jesus’ body, but in its delightful twist of making the only non-Israelite among the ten who were healed as they went, per Jewish custom, to the priest to give thanks, the one who turned back and offered thanks to Jesus. A Samaritan. Not a bad note for us who keep our doors and our services open to new people, with all that signifies: Some of our loveliest affirmations over the years have come, and will surely continue to come, from strangers who never attach to our part of the body.

So, I could end this by giving thanks for a very traditional list of teachings on this Sunday, and some of you might be heard to whisper, “Thank God, he’s

not expressed his own opinion so much, or offended someone who thinks differently.” There’s certainly plenty to say in church without getting mad at one another, or even getting into arguments. Thank you for listening. Amen.