**Sermon June 6, 2021**

 **It’s been more than a year since we were able to meet together. A year for many causing death and pain. Maybe you know someone who died or became sick during these many months. All of us in one way or another were affected by this pandemic. Please pray for the people the pandemic has hurt. I chose the sequence hymn *There is a Balm in Gilead* because over centuries, the medicinal perfume from a region called Gilead has become synonymous with healing. Some of the words from the hymn are, “…sometimes I get discouraged and think my work in vain, but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.” The Holy Spirit is there for each of us and will always revive our souls again especially now when we continue to lived through a pandemic.**

**For just a little while travel back with me to the time of Jesus. Stand for a moment in the crowd who were so angry with Jesus. Now think about his family trying to restrain Jesus because of the angry crowd all around him. How would any of us feel if our family came to where we were talking to a crowd and wanted to restrain us? It would be a terrible day for any of us and we would not understand. But the crowd who had gathered around Jesus were yelling appalling things. They were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” Also, they yelled, “He has Beelzebub, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.” Jesus was God’s Son, but he was also the child of a human being, Mary. Yet Mary and all of Jesus’ family were coming toward him attempting to restrain him.**

 **I was once was blessed to be a delicate at a National Episcopal Convention. At that convention I heard then Bishop Curry give a sermon. I had never heard an Episcopal Bishop or priest deliver a sermon like he did that day. His sermon was more spoken as if I were listening to a Baptist minister. Yet I liked his sermon and I realized how well he had made his point, and it seemed to me he was telling us what we exactly needed to hear. He said several times, “We need more crazy Christians.” He turned the negative implications of this lectionary reading into an extremely positive idea. We do need more so-called crazy Christians who are willing to take changes and step out of the norm of what is considered acceptable behavior.**

**We know all big cities have a lot of homeless people. Yet, it’s so easy to judge homeless people and think they should just help themselves. But the one time I worked at a homeless shelter, I found most of the people who came in for a meal were either veterans suffering from PTSD or people who had mental conditions. Our country doesn’t do enough for people who are truly incapable of helping themselves. Yet when I’m walking down a street my natural tendency is to look the other way and simply pass by people who are begging for money . I think what will they do with the money if I give them some money? Perhaps if I were more a crazy Christian, I‘d stop judging and give a handout to those who were asking me for help. If I were a little bit more of a crazy Christian, I might help in more ways the people I journey with through life.**

**As then Bishop Curry was suggesting, we need to step out of our comfort zones, look around and see what we could do for others if we were just a little more Christian. Yet I don’t do all that I can for others, and I suppose neither do any of us. That’s why Bishop Curry’s words telling us, we need more crazy Christians, are so meaningful to me. Those extreme words he spoke come back to me every now and again. I’m so grateful I was able to go to that convention and hear the extraordinary words of a man who would become our Presiding Bishop. Telling us we need more crazy Christians was Bishop Curry’s wake up call to go beyond our boundaries, our comfort zones. A call telling us to not become complacent Christians.**

**In every Gospel reading, Jesus said so many astute thoughts, it would be impossible to give them all justice in one sermon. Yet right now, in the time we live in, these words from Jesus this morning seem very appropriate. Jesus said, “And if a house is divided against itself it cannot stand.” You probably know by now I worked in a psychological capacity for a long time. In dream work, the word house always means us. If we think of ourselves as a house, we can more easily understand Jesus’ metaphor of a divided house. Of course, we don’t need to divide ourselves, yet we often do just that. Every time we say to ourselves, oh I didn’t do that right. Or, I feel like a failure. Or any other negative thought, we divide ourselves, and take ourselves away from God.**

**Jesus also said, "But no one can enter a strong man’s (or woman’s) house and plunder his (or her) property…) When we stand strong and not divided within ourselves, we are far less likely to be swayed by what other people think or believe. When we stand strong and not divided, we can better help our towns, our cities, our states, our country, and the people in them. I suppose that is what is meant by a pillar of our society. Some of the people who are pillars and keep standing strong, become people we admire throughout history. Yet each of us can be a pillar and stand strong. Our life matters and when we don’t allow ourselves to become divided or swayed away from what we know to be right, we can make a positive and lasting contribution for God’s children. I know that might sound grandiose, yet how else do we preserve what we value except one person at a time standing strong? Not allowing anyone or anything to divide us from what we believe to be right.**

 **I leave you with two thoughts this morning: the first one is as our Presiding Bishop Curry said, we need more crazy Christians. Christians who are willing to move out of their comfort zones and become more of who they’re meant to be. The second thought is, to stop dividing ourselves in half by dwelling on negative things we consider we have inside of ourselves. This doesn’t mean believing we’re perfect; it means being more accepting of our faults and foibles. I know this to be true, because the less time I spend criticizing myself, the more time I have for other other people as they travel along with me on this journey . Amen**