**Sermon Proper 18, 2021**

**Our lectionary readings this morning are all filled with words from Jesus. They are all examples of what it means to be a servant of our Lord Jesus.  To follow his examples as much as we can as we walk our path through our lives. It’s as if as we move through our lives, we are to grow closer to Jesus and his mission given to us to love one another, to care for one another, to shine our little lights as brightly as we can.  Then our little lights can become a large light by joining with other little lights. Because together we can bring a great deal of light and love and compassion and joy into this world for all of us to share with one another.**

**Today a reading from Proverbs comes along reminding us, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.” Yet at this moment in our history there are many around us who prefer riches to a good name.  In some of our churches Jesus’ becomes a white man with blue eyes. Yet reality tells us Jesus was a Jew from a desert Arabian land, he had dark skin. He was a poor man and somehow,he managed to treat all with love and compassion. The only exclusion to his way of love were hypocrites.**

**In our churches and in our government Jesus becomes a white man with blue eyes, who is always dressed in fine linen clothes and robes of beautiful colors. As a poor man Jesus wore plain homespun tunics with no great colorful robes over his shoulders. Yet what are some churches thinking when Jesus is seen as a white man dressed in the finest of clothes of his time. Yet some churches, have Jesus dressed up in fancy expensive clothes.**

**I wonder what would happen if people could visualize Jesus in their minds just in the clothes he wore?  He was a dark skinned man, wearing peasant clothes. If we can keep the humble, dark skinned man as the image of Jesus, who sometimes didn’t accept the powerful or the rich, perhaps our world might just be a more compassionate and loving place. Yet there are many images of Jesus wearing  fine robes and a golden crown on his head. He never wore a crown, nor fancy clothes.  The best I can understand people who believe Jesus wore crown and fancy clothes is to think they are under an unconscious sublimation. Just visualizing Jesus as more of the person he was when he walked the earth can help us not fall into the trap of visualizing him as a rich man. If we see him more closely as he looked, as a poor person charged to carry a great message to the whole world.  Seeing Jesus somewhat like he did look, I think will help us follow him more closely.**

**Isaiah had this to say to us this morning, “Do not rob the poor because they are poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the Lord pleads their cause and despoils of life those who despoil them.” It’s a shame that we do live in a country that does rob the poor just because they are poor. Children are left to go hungry and over time we can become immune to the plights of the poor. To children who go to bed hungry night after night, to elders not getting the kind of care they need.**

**We can all plead guilty to not doing enough for the poor and disadvantaged among us. We have done some good things for the poor and the disadvantage, and I believe we can continue our efforts to help feed poor people.  The pandemic is real, and it stops us from doing many thing we would like to do. We can remember to do what we did for one another before this terrible pandemic hit us.**

**I would encourage all of us to remermber to give at least one offering of food each week to be collected and given away when we’ve collected enough stables to give. I’m not preaching here, because I’m reminding myself as I remind all of us, we can each do little bit better. We’re Christians; we’re here to help one another as much as we can.  I know anything we do for others comes back in many ways to us, and in some ways we can’t even contemplate.**

**We now come to the Gospel reading according to St. John. Listen to the words Jesus spoke, “If a rich man comes into your assembly wearing gold rings and in fine clothes, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, ‘Have a seat here, please,’ while to the one who is poor you say, ‘Stand there,’ or, ‘Sit at my feet’, have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts” I think all of us do well greeting those who come to our church. We greet everybody, welcome them, and invite them into our service and offer our communion table to all who join us.**

**One more reminder given to us by Jesus**,“**Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor.” I realized these quotations from our readings today reach toward the heart of our Christianity, because of the requirement to help our brothers and sisters. It takes a conscious effort to remind ourselves we follow the great commandments given to us by Jesus, I know it takes dedication to love those people who are out of our inner circle. I also remind all of us, the word “love” is an action word. We are meant to grow stronger in our love toward Jesus, by turning that action word “love” into tangible reality toward people, toward all creatures great and small, toward our very earth as our world struggles for help as she groans through one more difficult day.**

**The last quotation from St. John this morning is, “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you** **have faith but do not have works?” Our works tell others about our faith. Amen**