

Morning Prayer October 19, 2014

I was a member of the quote/unquote “Younger Generation” back in the 1960s and 70s. I remember hearing a lot about the “Generation Gap” between the “Cool People” AKA the younger generation and the “Squares” AKA the older generation. In those days I saw the generation gap through the eyes of one of the “cool” people; but, today, I see it through quite different eyes-those of a square.

Having never been a parent, myself, I didn’t really appreciate the generation gap through the eyes of a square quite like I do now, having inherited from God the role of surrogate Dad to our nephew, who currently resides with Susan and I in our home. Man-talk about a generation gap! Let’s just say I’ve never felt more square and less cool. I couldn’t begin to tell you what the music is he listens to, or what it is he’s talking about on Facebook. I can only conclude that whatever it is is what’s currently considered to be “cool.”

But, Ya know, all generations have one thing in common, despite the time period, one thing they would agree is undeniably “cool.” And, that is the unconditional love of God. Whether we choose to be cool or square God’s love for us does not change. And whether we choose to serve Caesar or Christ, God’s love for us does not change.

When I took pride in being “cool” back in the 60s and 70s, I was ignorant of the fact that I was giving mostly to the emperor (called Jim) and not to God (called Jesus). Now that I’m learning to be more “cooly-square” (also known as growing old) I am gaining more wisdom about giving to God the things that are God’s. Of course-this is a process which requires dedication and perseverance, as Barbara Miller mentioned in her sermon a few weeks back. It requires the help of God and of the Church community-Lord knows I can’t do it alone. So, I now am quite happy and proud to be amongst all of you “cool” folks, who have chosen, or are gradually choosing to seek the things that are God’s versus those of the Emperor.

Despite their best efforts to resist the truth that came from the lips of Jesus and hold onto their ancient laws-by enlisting the help of Caesar and his army some 2000 years ago-the Pharisees and the Romans, I believe, ultimately could not deny that Jesus Christ was Lord and the kings and emperors of the world were not. Even the centurion at the Cross, who witnessed Jesus breathe His last breath said, “truly, this man was God’s Son!”

Back in those days Caesar actually bore the title “Son of God.” And, he even provided the people of the Empire with a peace-a peace bought with violence and death-an imperfect peace that was wrought with injustice and was only temporary for as long as the Empire remained standing. That, of course, was the problem with the Emperor’s Empire-it was subject to degradation and inevitable death as was the peace it provided.

But, the peace that Jesus promoted and preached was a permanent peace brought about through justice. Albeit, not one sparkling with “Bling” or “coolness”. Not one that served the Emperor-known as just you, or just me. But, a peace that comes through following the teachings of Jesus, who, as we all know, is the true Emperor and the true Son of God. And, His rule is not one of tyranny or the exercise of intimidation. No, His rule is one of service. As He told His disciples,

“I came not to be served, but to serve.” And, “whoever amongst you wants to be greatest of all must be servant of all.” “The first will be last and the last will be first,” and so on. The peace that Jesus professes is a peace that lasts because it sustains itself through divine justice. It survives in a world where everybody has enough-not just me and not just you. Such a world, such an empire, would be one over which Jesus would be happy to reign.

So, my challenge to you and my challenge to me is that we continue our dedication and perseverance to get better at giving to God the things that are God’s. We are approaching the time of year again when we will be hearing a lot about stewardship. At some point, we will be asked to pledge our tithe whether it be in the form of \$ or time, treasure and talent, or both.

Well, as we all know, the way to give to God the things that are God’s is by serving. We give to God by serving God’s people out of the abundance of blessings God has bestowed upon us. And, this is not a service confined to St. Peter’s alone. It’s a service to any and all of God’s people inside or outside of these walls. “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was naked and you clothed me. I was in prison and you visited me...” and so on.

So-thanks nephew-for providing me with the lens to see what it must have been like for my poor, parents to live around “cool” me all those years ago; and, for helping to show me the value and “coolness” of being “square.” My brothers and sisters in Christ, I am now convinced, that while it is cool to be “cool” it’s also “cool” to be “square.” May we continue with dignity and pride to give back to God the things that are God’s-namely-our thanksgivings manifested by our service. By helping those less fortunate than ourselves we feed, clothe and nurture Christ, Himself. Perhaps, then, with God’s help, we can grow more proficient at giving back to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s-things like selfishness, greed, envy, power; and, yes, those “pesky” taxes.

Two thousand years ago the Jews were waiting for God to come. God came and a select few, who were paying attention, recognized Him. What they learned by listening to Jesus was that while they-the Jews-had been waiting for God, God, in fact, had been waiting for them-waiting for them to seek God. Those who were wise enough to seek Him, found Him and His name was Jesus-the “coolest square” who ever lived. He gave us the formula, the recipe, of how we could invite God’s collaboration with us in what could be called the “Great Divine Cleanup of the World,” through a path of service and love not for self, but for each other in “community.” Imagine, brothers and sisters, if we succeeded at diverting our resources (our time, treasure and talents) away from the emperors of this world (ourselves) and toward the emperor of the Kingdom of God (Jesus), we would truly give back to God and perhaps attract God’s divine help leading to a world of peace by way of divine justice. A world under the reign of Christ Himself in an empire not bought with violence and oppression-but one bought with selflessness and service. A world where all people of all generations felt “cool” and equal. A world where no one would feel slighted because someone has more and/or they have less. A world where everyone trusted God’s divine grace and justice to be enough for them.

In the words of John Lennon, imagine a world where there is “no heaven above us and no hell below us.” A world involving God’s grace to lead us out of the exile of the empire of greed and into the empire of Christ and Community-Back to the Garden and

the Tree of Life bearing the fruit of peace, justice, and the reign of our Lord in all His Glory and Splendor. God is ready! God is waiting! Waiting for us to go forth reminding each other and those we meet to bridge the “Gap” back to God by following Jesus who can lead us back home-back to The Garden-Amen.