

Sarah B. Drummond

August 27, 2017

First Baptist Church of White Plains, NY

Sermon Title: Christ's Partners

Scriptures:

II Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with him (alternate translation: "partner with Christ"), we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you."

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Matthew 16:13-20

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Summary:

Jesus was born and raised by parents in a community. He had a world-transforming ministry, died and was risen, and along the way cultivated the leadership of disciples who carried his ministry forward to this very day. Why, with all these profound truths evident in our tradition and scriptures, do we resort to Hallmark-card sentimentality when speaking of the relationship between Jesus and human beings?

We want to feel close to Jesus because feeling close to God is too abstract for our minds to grasp. How can we find that relationship in an active way that makes us better people, closer

together with one another and closer to God? What might be a biblically- and theologically-grounded way to think about the personal relationship between Jesus and humanity?

In today's scriptures, we learn that one way to think about being Christians is to consider ourselves **Christ's partners in the world**, working together with him to make the world more as God imagines it to be. Peter, the first minister, accepts an invitation into this partnership. The first step for him is belief. Yet that belief didn't come immediately but only after he had a relationship with Jesus as a person.

On Sunday, August 27, we will consider how Peter - that first partner to Christ - came to his realization and his role, how Paul taught his church in Corinth about working together with Jesus, and how we might imagine a partnership with Christ in our own lives.