



Grace Church

The Rev. Dr. Matthew Calkins
Rector

Wake Up and Smell the Coffee

Sermon for All Saints Day, November 6, 2016

Readings: Daniel 7:1-3,15-1; Psalm 149; Ephesians 1:11-23; Luke 6:20-31

Sermon text: "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.... Do to others as you would have them do to you."

The four-horned beast of Daniel's prophecy has been slain. The Chicago Cubs have won the World Series.

What could possibly come next? We'll find out Tuesday.

But for now let's rejoice in the demonstration of one of Jesus' sayings: the last shall be first. It took one hundred and eight years, but it happened.

I couldn't stay up for the whole game seven. I watched at a restaurant until the Cubs lead 5 to 2 and then went home. At home, I followed the play by play on my computer as the Indians tied the game in the eighth. My goodness, what folks must felt in Cubland then. Oh no, it's happening again! And then a rain delay. I went to bed.

I learned the next morning that during the rain delay, down in the Cub clubhouse, Jason Heyward, a veteran player, called a team meeting. No coaches were present. Heyward realized his teammates needed to be *loved on* (as he told the press later). He reminded them how great they played all year, how great they were now—and how they were to go out there in the extra innings and win.

And they did! A two run rally in the tenth that held up after the Indians themselves mounted yet another valiant comeback and scored one run. It ended with a slow grounder to third. Kris Bryant, the young Cub superstar, smiled as he scooped it up and threw to first. Pandemonium in Chicago. They could use some good news. God bless them. And after all, Cleveland still has Lebron.

We all need to be loved on now and then. And we also *need to be needed*. So wrote the Dalai Lama in a rather unlikely op-ed in the *Times* this week, penned in collaboration with conservative commentator Arthur Brook. The point of the article was how human persons

generally long to do something of value, some work that helps folks, some way to be needed in the world in which they live. And when people are deprived of the opportunity to be of use in the world, they wither a bit, they fail to flourish.

Which is why we are happiest when we are serving others.

And why, even when we are being abused, we can, if we listen to Jesus and learn from him, love our enemies. We can still help those in need, regardless of whether they “deserve” help. We can intercede—even with just a prayer. We can exchange a kind thought for one that hurts.

People need to be loved on, not hated on. There is way too much of that and it is not helping anything. So, there’s the need; let us meet it, each as we can.

We had our annual diocesan Convention this week. Bishop Andy Dietsche gave an inspiring speech at Convention—not so easy when the subject is a strategic plan and canonical revision. The strategic plan—so carefully wrought and in which so many listened and participated—ended up being passed unanimously, even by those delegates from churches that may very well suffer adverse financial consequences of the new canons. That is good leadership.

Bishop Mary Glasspool, in her speech, repeated a story that Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks, told in his recent book, *Onward: How Starbucks Fought For Its Life Without Losing Its Soul*. Schultz recalled going into a Starbucks franchise sometime in 2010—a period when the company had opened franchises all over the world and become the world’s largest coffee vendor. But when Schultz walked in, he couldn’t smell coffee. There were lots of good smells in the place—lots of appetizing things were being sold. But in the store famous for coffee he couldn’t smell that distinctive Starbucks coffee smell. And he said to himself, this is wrong. We have to smell like coffee when someone walks in. That’s who we are—passionate coffee lovers—no matter what else we are.

Take a deep breath. Do you sense God’s presence here? When you walk into Grace, when you participate in the worship service, do you feel that you have come into a place where prayer has been made, and answered? When you come to the altar rail and receive a small pice of bread dipped in wine, do you taste God? If not, that’s a problem.

Because that’s what we are about. Coming together in common prayer. Participating in holy Communion with Jesus Christ the Risen Lord. We worship God and follow Jesus. We learn his Way and go out and try to follow it. If we are not doing that, if we are not feeling that sense of connection, strength and purpose, well, we need to return to fundamentals.

And this is fundamental: the Way of Jesus at its very heart is about loving your enemies. About doing to others what you would have done to you. About everyone being blessed, even the poor and suffering—even the rich, unless, woe is them, they think they have it made and don’t need anyone else. Don't need God? Well, enjoy this life while you can. Because all this fades, all youth ages, all of you parents and working folks, so needed now, will be in need later. Those who give care will need care. The first will be last.

And when that day comes, will you think to yourself, Nobody needs me now? Again, remember how Jesus turns everything around, at every age. The young need the old, the strong need the weak, the rich need the poor, the native-born needs the stranger, the

immigrant, the refugee. Because if it is true that to be happy and fulfilled, we need to be of value, to serve, then of course we need people to help, to serve. And we need in our turn to receive help. This is the currency of grace, the cycle of mercy.

This is not a world in which there are permanent winners and losers—even the Yankees have years to rebuild, and now, as we see, even the Cubs can be World Champions.

And what is winning and losing is also a subject of reversal, as Jesus teaches. No matter what happens in the election, no matter what happens in a family fight, our call as followers of Jesus is to love. Even your political enemies. To forgive even the hardest wounds a family member can dish out—and those hurt. To forgive even those who kill and bomb and hate. Forgive them, Jesus said, for they do not know what they do. They are blinded by hate and enslaved by sin.

To love, to forgive, does not mean to give in to evil, to refrain from the hard work of justice. To love is to will the good for that person, these people. You won't help them by hating in return. What will help is to seek to understand before judging. What will free your soul, is not to give in to fear and hate. What will move us toward God's reign of love, is to follow the golden rule: do to others as you would have them do to you. Jesus, Confucius, Kant; that's pretty impressive company in agreement on this fundamental ethical principle. If you don't think it is true, it is not what you are trying to do every day in every way, if it is not what we are modeling here in this community, in this place of prayer, well, we better wake up and smell the coffee.

In Christ's name, Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Matthew Calkins, Rector
Grace Church, Millbrook, NY