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Our Saviour Lutheran Church
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Pentecost 5

Let us pray...May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and you are most certainly our redeemer. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, decades from now, when our grandchildren or great grandchildren, or even our great great grandchildren are looking back on this period in history...

Say in the year 2050, when those who come after us are revisiting this moment in time...

What, pray tell, will they say about this generation?

Will people in the future speak of us as the COVID-19 Generation, or the Coronavirus Generation, or the Pandemic Generation?

Possibly. Or will we be called something else?

Will people in the future look back at us and marvel that we experienced such things as social distancing, and stay-at-home orders?

Will people in the future look back at us and marvel that most everything came to a standstill for a while—that school buildings, church buildings, restaurants, closed their doors?

Will people in the future look back at us and marvel that unemployment skyrocketed...

...that grocery store shelves were emptied of many items...

...that n95 masks, Clorox wipes, and hand sanitizer were hot ticket items?

Or will they marvel at something else about this generation?

What will people in the future say about this generation?

PAUSE

We know how other generations have been described.

The Greatest Generation was a label assigned to the period of World War II.

Tom Brokaw, coined the phrase, writing in his book by the same title, he said that the men and women who fought in WWII did so not for fame or recognition, but because it was “the right thing to do.”

PAUSE

And before we had the Greatest Generation, we had what was called the Lost Generation.

This was the generation that lived during the years following World War I.

Gertrude Stein is credited with having coined the term, “The Lost Generation.”

But it was Ernest Hemingway in his book *The Sun Also Rises*, that made the label “The Lost Generation” popular.

The Lost Generation was characterized by a lack of purpose and drive resulting from the horrific disillusionment of those who grew up and lived through the war and the meaningless death associated with it.

PAUSE

And then there is the Silent Generation. This was the generation after the Greatest Generation.

We have the Lost Generation, followed by the Greatest Generation, followed by the Silent Generation.

The Silent Generation was the product of the Great Depression and World War II, and so the people of the Silent Generation were characterized as keeping their heads down and working hard, not taking risks but playing it safe.

Thus they came to be known as the Silent Generation.

So, each generation has a designation, each generation gets a label.

And so we do have to wonder how this generation will be characterized.

What will people in the future say about the people who lived at this time?

PAUSE

What is amusing to me is how little humanity changes over the decades, even over the millennia.

We humans like to “label” things. We human like to give names to things.

Case in point, the designations for each generation.

And even Jesus, in his own day and age, was not above describing his generation.

In our gospel reading today we see Jesus speaking to a crowd, saying, “To what will I compare this generation?”

How will I describe this generation?

What label should I give this generation?

And, in short Jesus says, “This generation is a generation that doesn’t seem to get it.”

Jesus observes how John the Baptist was going about his business, not eating nor drinking in excess, not doing anything out of the ordinary, and yet, Jesus says, “This generation says John the Baptist has a demon.”

Jesus observes again how the Son of Man (a reference to himself) was found eating and drinking with others, and he says, "This generation called him a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners."

This generation, Jesus is saying, just doesn't seem to get it.

What might Jesus then call his generation?

How might he label his generation?

How about the "Misguided Generation"?

That is, the generation that showed faulty judgment or reasoning.

Yes, the "Misguided Generation" sounds like a good descriptor.

We could probably come up with a less kind descriptor, but using a "mis-" word always softens a given circumstance.

You ever notice that?

For example, saying you "misplaced" something sounds better than saying you "lost" something.

Saying you "misspoke" sounds better than saying you "lied" about something.

Saying you "misunderstood" sounds better than saying you "didn't listen."

Saying the generation of Jesus' day was characterized by faulty judgment or reasoning, is harsher than saying that they were the Misguided Generation.

It is also better than saying that they are Querulous Generation, that they quarreled with each other, that they couldn't seem to get along, like children who couldn't play together happily.

We played the flute and you didn't dance.

We wailed, and you did not mourn.

This generation was querulous. They don't get along.

They had faulty judgment and reasoning.

But we will be kind and call them the "Misguided Generation."

We will stick with that descriptor.

And so, Jesus says to this Misguided Generation that even though you don't understand...

Even though your judgment and reasoning is faulty...

Even though you quarrel like children who don't get along...

Even though you just don't get it...

"Let me tell you," so says Jesus. "Let me tell you that wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

Now that sounds rather cryptic, doesn't it?

And so we wonder what Jesus means by saying, "Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

Maybe it was some cliché people threw around in conversation back then.

Not unlike when we say, "It is what it is," when we recognize we can't change a given situation.

Or when we urge someone to see something particular, so we say, "Read between the lines."

Or, when we counsel someone to work something to their advantage, saying “If you play your cards right...”

So then, maybe “wisdom is vindicated by her deeds,” was a cliché in Jesus’ day.

But nevertheless, what does Jesus mean when he says that?

What does Jesus mean but that God’s wisdom is revealed in the deeds of Christ.

The wisdom (of God) is vindicated by the deeds (revealed in Christ).

Yes, the wisdom of God is sometimes hard to see.

Jesus even says as much when he tells us in our gospel reading that some things are “hidden from the wise and the intelligent.”

Some things are veiled even though they are in plain view.

Think of the cross of Christ.

Luther said that the power of God, the power of God is hidden in weakness, just look at the cross.

No one in Jesus’ day would have seen the crucifixion as the place where God was working out the salvation of all the world.

But there at Golgotha, there at the place of the skull...

There where Jesus was nailed to a cross between two criminals...

There at Christ’s crucifixion, God’s wisdom was vindicated by her deeds.

God’s wisdom IS sometimes hard to see, especially when God’s wisdom is such that a cross is used to display God’s power.

PAUSE

Indeed, many in the Misguided Generation of Jesus' day just didn't get it.

Many in the Misguided Generation were blinded by faulty judgment and reasoning.

Many in the Misguided Generation therefore would not have recognized God's power displayed in the death of a man on a cross.

But there it is.

There is God's wisdom on a cross revealed in the suffering and death of Christ, who by his death destroys death and the power of sin.

But, the Misguided Generation, plagued with faulty judgment and faulty reasoning, just doesn't see it.

They just don't see it.

PAUSE

But wisdom IS vindicated by her deeds.

Think on that for a moment as it relates to this generation.

Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.

The COVID-19 Generation, the Coronavirus Generation, the Pandemic Generation...for me, all of those descriptors leave us with a less than satisfied feeling.

Wouldn't you agree?

Sisters and brothers in Christ, should not a generation be defined not by the circumstance in which its lives, but by its response to its circumstances?

In short, should not a generation be defined by its deeds?

Tom Brokaw did not call it the “World War II Generation.”

No, but instead he called it the “Greatest Generation,” why—because of the response from men and women to do what was right.

How people in the future then ultimately come to label this generation will depend, or should depend, upon how we respond to the pandemic and the other circumstances in which we live?

If we scoff at officials with respect to mandates about social distancing and wearing masks, and many more people die, well then maybe this generation will come to be called the “Indifferent Generation”.

If we fail to listen to each other regarding the issue of race, and just go about life as if everything is just fine, maybe this generation will come to be called the “Apathetic Generation.”

But if on the other hand, if we do respond in a faithful way...

If we acknowledge the wisdom of God at work in our humble deeds...

If we take the position of power hidden in weakness, such that we accompany those who are our neighbors, those who are most affected by present circumstances in this generation...

If we do what is needful for the health of our sister or brother...

If we listen to our neighbor whose skin color differs from ours, as well as listen to those who are serving our country faithfully and commendably as members of the police force...

If we do indeed respond with the love and mercy of God in Jesus Christ...well then, this generation, our generation may very well come to be called something like the “Godly Generation.”

And wouldn't that be something?

But, Friends, it all depends on us, on how we as a people respond, and by what we do in this moment.

For Jesus rightly observes, wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.

Godly wisdom is revealed in our Christian deeds in this and in every generation.

Thanks be to God. Amen.