

Pastor Jordan Gades Sermon 10/17/21

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

How do we come to an end of things? How do we sum up our time together? Those aren't rhetorical, I'm really asking, how are we supposed to do this? But maybe that is a ridiculous question. Because this isn't the end. We are brothers and sisters, held together as a family by the strength and grace of our God. And while in a few short days I will no longer be your pastor I know that I will see you all again. But before I find myself crumbling into a sentimental mess I would like you to hear a few of the things that I hope you've heard me say a few times over the last few years.

I hope you've heard me being me. Because I feel like every time I came into this space I felt all of you being you. I was able to join in your joy and I was able to share in your pain. I hope you've heard the stories of how the youth of this congregation have embraced and lived out their faith, having lots of fun along the way, all with only one trip to the ER under my watch. Well, I guess I don't know how widely spread that one story was told. But everyone is fine. Those long and yet somehow amazing hours in vans, and cars, and buses. All those snacks and meals shared, those thousands of conversations. God is acting in the lives of our kids and youth and they are responding by diving deeper.

I hope you've heard from me about the incredible connection between the old testament and the new, and I hope you've learned to love the old testament as I do as well. There's law and Gospel, there crazy stories and stories that will connect so much they break your heart. There are stories that unite and there are stories that divide. Take the story of Jonah, all society wants us to quibble about is whether or not there was a whale or fish involved, not the deep intriguing messages of a God that works in all places, a God who loves his enemies, A God who works unexpectedly and through everyone else except the "hero" of the tale. Or how we can all learn the meaning of being a follower of God through the story of Abraham. There was a man who was a bold courageous follower of God, listened to the call of God and followed his instructions then completely wimped out, and became a complete coward and sold his wife not once but 2 times in order to save his own hide. Here was a man of great faith that went to the extreme in listening to God, even when it was hard, even when God called for the death of his own son, and here was the man who stood up, face to face with God, defied him and argued with God again and again and again until he got God to change his mind.

In the old testament, we hear about King David. David the victor over the mighty giant Goliath, David the champion of God's mighty armies, David the shepherd king; but also, David the murderer, David the adulterer, David, whose hands were so permanently covered and encrusted in the blood that God denied him the opportunity to build the temple.

Those stories are there with so so so many others. Waiting to be delved. Waiting to be explored, waiting to be released into your own life. Because ultimately that's what this Holy word is and does. These are not just some really cool stories, this is God speaking, changing us, transforming us in the reading of these Holy words.

Transformation is happening. It's hard to understand how much fun it has been to try and explain the works and Life of Martin Luther to our 7th and 8th graders for the last couple of weeks. There is so much depth and so little time, and for the love of all that is holy, they need to make a better movie out of his story that has more of the political intrigue, danger, passion, and faith that is integral to the story of the church across the world. There is so much going our own history that gives us pause but also gives life and meaning to the world around us. How do we hold onto what is true in the midst of a hostile and changing world? We may not have an immediate answer for now but we can look back and see how God has guided and walked with God's people throughout the ages and throughout history, and throughout these last 50 years, throughout this last decade throughout this last year, throughout this last month, and we see the promises of God coming to life. Those same promises hold us all today and will hold us tomorrow.

And that is why we are here today. And I emphasize the "we" today as hope I have done a thousand times during my time here. A church is a group of people coming together to worship and praise their God who has done wonderful things. A church is a group that welcomes all in, that supports one another, a group that relies on one another, a group that through the Holy Spirit, loves one another. A church is called to care for the people within it and those people outside of it. And a church is a group of people that grow in their faith together. We were created to be together, we were created to live amongst people who know God. We were created to share our faith. To encourage one another, to show God to each other, to teach and learn from each other. Our faith is not our own.

This place has been my home because you are here and because God is here. God has breathed life into this place and blessed it. I see that blessing when I hear the laughs and shouts and cheers after school on Wednesdays. I see it in the countless eyes of all those who come to this place with a physical hunger and leave haven been fed on more than just bread. I have felt it in the handshakes, high fives, and hugs of all the people here today and more.

Thank you all for opening your hearts to me. Thank you for walking this journey of faith with me. Thank you teaching, thank you for correcting, thank you for loving. May God Bless you all keep you for all the days of your live and forever more. Amen.