



Among the crafts brought to Britain by the Romans was mosaic making. Fishbourne, in southern England, has marvelous examples of this art form. Mosaics are not limited to Britain though. You can see them throughout Europe and the Near East, in particular.

A mosaic is made up of itty-bitty pieces of tile, rock or other hard substances that are placed in ways that create a picture. When you look very closely at the mosaic, you can see the individual pieces but not the broader picture. When you stand back, you cannot see the individual pieces but you can appreciate the whole- how those itty-bitty pieces fit together just-so to form a beautiful piece of art.

Last week I asked if we could accept that we are where we are- no longer focusing on how we got here. No longer looking long and hard at the itty-bitty pieces and missing the big beautiful picture. No longer focusing on where some of the itty-bitty pieces might be missing or be chipped or be dull and not as bright as when the tiles came out of the potter's kiln.

And I asked if we could dream into the future of what God is calling us to be and do in this place at this time. Right now we're repairing and building a new mosaic. One which has bright colors and one which our neighbors will want to see. I don't know yet, what the final design will be. I do know it is a work-in-progress that needs each of us –sharp edges and all. We each have a place and a role in the unfolding big picture of how St. John's will spread the good news of Jesus Christ in this place and this time.

The Revelation to John speaks more than once of Jesus as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Rev. 1:8; 22:13). There is no place where God is not present. There is no thing that is not under God's protection. There is nothing that is not loved by God. Just as we say when the offerings are brought forward: All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. All that we are, all that we have, comes from God.

Acts 16:16-34; Ps. 97; Rev. 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20-21; John 17:20-26

Someone once said when talking to a person who focused on the glass being half-full. “Get a smaller glass.” Jesus tells us that everyone who is thirsty should come and take the water of life as a gift (Rev. 22:17). With Jesus, there is no such thing as a glass half-full. The water of life is unceasing and is everlasting. Abundance beyond comprehension.

Tom Harper, in Leading from the Lion’s Den<sup>1</sup>, a collection of leadership principles from every book of the Bible, gleans this concept from the Revelation to John: “An organization finds its sweet spot when its people emerge from weakness in the excitement of newfound strength and vision.” To use the mosaic metaphor, the sweet spot comes when we can see the uniqueness of each of us, as individuals, and also see how we fit together as a whole – bringing beauty to the world around us by being united in our love of Christ Jesus and in gratitude from all that we have been given. We are each necessary to the whole- and the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus is praying to God on behalf of his disciples. Eternal life is faith in God. Jesus asks for understanding on the part of the disciples and those who will follow that God is in Jesus and Jesus is in God- and that if we believe in Jesus, then we, too, will be one. Jesus prays that by making the name of God known to the disciples through the love Jesus has for them, that they will then be empowered to pass along that love and knowledge of God to others (John 17:26). As one loves God, one passes along that love to others and then to others and on and on and on until all will come to know the love of God.

Our Baptismal Covenant echoes these words as do the carvings on our Baptismal Font: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. Unity in love of God and for all of God’s creation.

Unity does not require uniformity. A mosaic is made up of many pieces of different shapes and sizes and colors. They are not uniform. But they work together in unity to create a magnificent whole. We are each different – different genders, backgrounds, financial positions, careers, family situations – in so many ways we are not uniform. And, we can live in unity together when we acknowledge God as creator, redeemer and sustainer.

Unity does not require uniformity. After all, if uniformity was required, why would we have 4 gospels? It is true that three of the gospels share significant material- but even then, each gospel has something unique and special to say to us about God and Jesus and how we are to live together. It is one Bible that is true. One Bible made up of 66 books. Unity but not uniformity.

Just as adhesive underlays each tile in a mosaic, the love of God underlays all that we do and all that we are. One of our great hymns is “There’s a wideness in God’s mercy”<sup>2</sup>. The third verse is:

For the love of God is broader than the measure of the mind;  
And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.  
If our love were but more faithful, we should take him at his word;

<sup>1</sup> Tom R. Harper. Leading from the Lion’s Den (Nashville: B&H Publishing Company, 2010), 203.

<sup>2</sup> Hymnal 1982, 469. Words: Frederick William Faber. Music: *Beecher*, John Zundel.

And our life would be thanksgiving for the goodness of the Lord.

Let us pray:

We thank you, Redeeming God, for the glorious message that you bring new hope out of despair, resurrection out of defeat, and new life out of death.

You call dry bones to dance.

You give living water so that new life blossoms.

You urge flowers to push their way through winter-hardened soil.

We bring before you the dead and dried-out places in our lives, that through your touch we may discover newness of life.

Forgotten dreams, lapsed intentions, hardened resentments, griefs to which we cling like children who cling to a worn but cherished toy or blanket;

These we hand over to you, knowing that you will return them, mended, washed, renewed, transformed.

We bring before you the places in our lives and in our world where despair reigns unchallenged.

With grief we bring our concerns for all places where the cycle of violence goes on and on.

Point us toward actions, however small, which lead to a more hopeful future for ourselves and for our world.

Gracious God, we thank you that you walk beside us as we journey through life.

Because you are with us, we accept each new day, with its joys and sorrows, as a gift.

Because you are with us, we gain courage to meet the challenge of the day, choosing life and not death as we move through time.

As you raised Jesus from the dead, raise us to new life day by day.

For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ruth C. Duck in Touch Holiness (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990), 91-92.