

JUSTICE IS PERVERTED, BUT, ARE YOU

By Rev. James A. Gardner

October 2, 2016 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Old Testament Reading; Habakkuk 1: 1-4, 2: 1-4

Responsive Reading; Psalm 37: 1-9

Epistle Reading; 2nd Timothy 1: 1-14

Gospel Reading; Luke 17: 5-10

Summary: The world is spinning out of control and God is solid as a rock. Either way you have to hold on for dear life, which are you holding on to?

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us be joyful and glad in it.

How many times have you heard that passage?

How many times has that passage seemed like the stupidest thing you have ever heard? How many times have you heard that when everything was going wrong in your life?

How many times have you said to yourself, “That is easy for you to say preach. You have a good job, a nice car, a fine home and

you are in good health. Try saying that when you have walked a mile in my shoes sometime.”?

OK here goes I am going to speak to that point while I am in the worst pain I can remember in my life due to either spinal fluid leaking out of my spine or severe sciatica, depending on which doctor you talk to. One doctor says expect 2 to 6 weeks of unbearable pain while another says 3 months and the woman who is going through it right now just smiles and drives away in her wheel chair.

At the same time my wife Wanda is in Genesee County Nursing Home/Rehab unable to feed herself at times and unable to call out on her cell phone because she can’t figure it out. And this is the woman who used to reconfigure Windows when Gates tried to slow everything down if she installed a competitor’s software.

I have to say emphatically that I am not looking for sympathy because my condition and circumstance on this day is a gift from God to you. God is letting me make it real.

Habakkuk says it like it is. “O Lord, how long must I call for help before you listen, before you save us from violence? Why do you make us see so much trouble? How can you stand to look on such wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are all around me, and there is fighting and quarreling everywhere. The law is

weak and useless, and justice is never done. Evil people get the better of the righteous, and so justice is perverted.”

We see these things in the news, the riots, and in politics. We see it in our own circumstances and feel it in our bodies.

Almost 12 years ago Wanda and I came to temporarily serve in this church until you got a full time minister. Paul spent years in chains and so have Wanda and I but you chained us down with your unbelievable love. We could not leave if we tried.

Our church is Christ centered and welcoming. I have never been in a more welcoming church. You welcomed us and Danny and when Danny’s girlfriend asked him why he had to go to a church so far away from Batavia he told her, “Because they love me there,” This is the first church Danny has been able to say that about any church.

We are a Christ centered church. Christ said, “If you love me you will keep my commandments. “ And what were the commandments of Christ? “Love others as I have loved you and as you have done unto the least of these so you have done unto me.”

Every time you are good to a stranger, every time you withhold judgment of another human being you have been good to Christ, and I do not believe that you are even capable of not showing love and consideration to others.

OK that is the “Win one for the Gipper” part of the message, the other part is why should we hold fast to God when everything seems to be going nuts?

I started this message sounding like a crybaby telling you all the things going wrong for me on this particular day. Now I am going to sound like a loony tune by telling you how I react to my problems.

Every night after I try to sleep through my pain I decide to get up and the first things I say are, “I love you God. I love you God. I love you God.” And then I say, “Thank you God. Thank you God. Thank you God.” I did not know why I said these things; I just knew that I could not help myself.

I realized that this seemed to make no sense so I did some serious thinking to what I was doing.

I think I figured me out.

When a small child is in distress it cries out MOMMY. The toddler usually does not have to tell mommy what is wrong because mommies know everything and can make anything better. I am 70 years old and do not have a mommy or that kind of trust in a mommy anymore but I do have God.

God has promised to always be there for me even till the end of time. God has never failed me yet. I believe in God and in God’s unsurpassable love for me and for every other human being in

the world. If God loves them as much as he loves me who am I not to love them also?

This is the next step in learning to be closer to Jesus. Yes it is a little less natural. We all are tempted to feel sorry for ourselves but Jesus put others ahead of himself, he even forgave the people that murdered him as they were doing it. Hey I don't know if I can do that yet but I believe I am getting closer. More Faith?

If I had faith the size of a mustard seed I could tell a tree to uproot itself and plant itself in Lake Ontario and it would. If I could do this I would not be special, I would be an ordinary servant of God only doing what was expected of me.

Well guess what. We aren't going to be ordinary servants that way but we can be ordinary servants by inviting people to share the experience of a loving and truly Christian Church.

I believe our church would offer to serve the slave before we ate.

First we have to stop feeling sorry for ourselves, even if it seems justified, and then we need to reach out to others, especially those that are not being included in God's promise.

Let's do it. Hallelujah and amen