

Sermon at Coventry Cathedral.

Abundant Life Together

Acts 2:42-47; John 10:1-10

26 April 2026

Good morning beloved of God. I greet you in the name of the resurrected Christ in this Easter season, as spring is emerging and there are signs of new life everywhere you look. It is indeed a privilege for me to join you all this day and to share a word with you on our Abundant Life Together.

Hear again these words from John, chapter 10, verse 10:

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Will you pray with me?

I Love You Lord (and I lift my voice)

Christian communities for almost 2000 years have drawn inspiration from Acts 2, verse 42-47 in how they sought to be in relationship, how they would share, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer called it, Life Together. From the early house churches, to monastic communities to our modern day traditional communities and especially some of the new expressions of faith that we see emerging and re-emerging in our world, people are asking the question what does it mean for us, as a community for “All who believed [to be] together and [have] all things in common, as it says in Acts 2, 44. It goes on starting in vs. 45, they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

This particular set of verses offer an answer the bigger question that I hope we all have asked ourselves more than once in our lives and in particular in this season, in the

church of Eastertide and in our world. How do we, how do you, how do I answer the question, what does it mean to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ today? Right here, right now. Not, 10 years ago, or 20 years ago, or 30, 40, 50, or 80 years ago. What does it mean today?

And as a pastor in the local church, serving in the United States of America, in the Baltimore Maryland, the closest major city to Washington, DC, it's a question I ask myself every day, even on my days off from work. Because I have not only my congregation to worry about, not only my neighbors, I have to ask myself that question each day. I have to be sure that I, Scott Bostic, am walking the walk, and not just talking the talk. Lest I find myself as one who is like the Apostle Paul described in 1 Corinthians 13, "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."

I ponder this question of what does it mean to faithfully follow Jesus today, as a Pastor, a preacher and a teacher, a leader, a neighbor, a parent, and a person. I do this with such rigor and intentionally right now because I see the world in which I find myself, and I'm troubled.

I'm troubled, because the chaos and violence, spoken, enacted, seems to be at a level that exceeds the time almost 25 years ago when the Attacks on September 11th rocked my life, my country, and the whole world for many years to come. I'm troubled because the behavior of more and more world leaders is resembling the behavior of some of the worst and most hatefilled tyrants of the history that I studied growing up and as a cadet at the United States Military Academy in NY, as the attacks took place on Sept 11th, 2001, and after. I'm troubled because the tolerance for such actions seems to be higher than before and so many people are struggling to grasp the reality that the ways that served us for over 6 decades are faltering and leaving us with new and old questions, like "What do we do now" and "where do we go from here?"

In my context in the United States just outside of the capitol, Washington DC, I see Christian Nationalism and White Supremacy on full display in ways I never dream I

would, on a daily basis, and the lack of outrage by the church who calls themselves followers of Christ is disturbing. And it's not just in the United States, nor is it just in the houses of worship of the Christian faith, but given that I am a christian and I believe most of you are Christians, or interested in that, I'll stick to our lane for today.

I look at Christianity across the globe and wonder where is our moral outrage, or challenging of the actions of a few as they impact so many, and cause such widespread suffering, not in Christ's name, but claiming Christ's blessing and authority as they do so.

When people who say that a Christians, but are more willing to follow the guidance of their elected leaders than the teachings of Christ, we are in trouble. When as Christians we allow people to cherry pick and distort the verses of our scriptures to justify their violence against people groups and nations that they don't like, we are in trouble. When world leaders are bold enough to claim a more comprehensive and authoritative understanding of scripture than the Pope, we are in trouble. When Christian Nationalism, which is a perversion of Christianity, and a charade of nationalism dressed up with faith, is spreading in our world instead of shrinking, we are in trouble.

We're in trouble because we've stopped listening and thinking and become a flock of lost sheep. And if we aren't then we are witnessing it and probably closer than we'd like to admit to being lost ourselves.

Jesus talks often about sheep, an image that may be fully lost on some of us, who like me, have never worked as shepherds, let alone of farms or raising groups of animals. And no, in this case tiny humans don't count unless you had a lot of them, like 8 or more.

The Sheep that Jesus is talking about in John 10 are hearing more than one voice attempting to lead and guide them. One is the good shepherd, and others are not. One is Jesus, the others are not. One, who told Peter when he drew his sword to defend

him, said put away your sword, for those who live by the sword, will die by the sword, and others are saying power through violence and intimidation are the only way to lead and be strong. One is saying love your neighbor as you love yourself, and the others are saying, those people who are different that you, who think differently, look differently, speak differently, act differently, love differently, they are not your neighbors, they are the enemy. One is saying love your enemies, and the others are rationalizing their genocide and obliteration. One is saying, I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly, and others are like a thief who comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

So I must ask, Church, who are you listening to? Jesus tells us in this story that the sheep know the shepherds voice and listen to it. But do we? Which voice are we listening to and following? Are we as confused as the disciples in the story?

To be clear, to be confused, like the disciples is to be in good company, after all, they did eventually figure things out and are the reason that we have the scriptures and the stories of Jesus at all.

But I worry that we are more like the confused and hiding disciples of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, than the Transformed and Courageous Disciples after Easter, like the ones we find in our reading from Acts 2.

Beloved in Christ, today, in these times, maybe more than anytime in our life, we need to be clear who we are following, whose voice we are listening to, AND we have to show that in our lives. We have to live like ones who follow Christ, not just talk about it.

So quickly, here are few practical actions to living like a confident and faithful disciple in these moments:

- 1) Ground yourself in scripture and prayer everyday, including prayers that make you uncomfortable, like Christ give me the courage to act like you today no matter the cost.
- 2) Love your neighbors like our world depends upon it, because it does, it always has, and it makes such a difference now to be that kind of Christian in a world that wants us divided.
- 3) Seek out opportunities to love on others who are not the same as you. Different ages, ethnic groups, cultures, communities, faith traditions. And love them like Christ loves you. And if that seems overwhelming or your not sure where to start, ASK for help from your priest or the staff here,, and then get to it, and do it.
- 4) Ask questions of people who justify hate in their faith and scriptures, and remind yourself of the great gospel of Love that we follow, as followers of Christ.
- 5) Call out Christian Nationalism, and faith based blessing of hatred and violence as the sinful idolatry that they are AND show the world what being a Christian is really about, loving God and loving those whom God loves, which is everyone, not exceptions.
- 6) In summary, Don't talk about it, be about it.

When we do this we will find ourselves on the track that Christ laid before us throughout the teachings and life of Christ. We'll find ourselves having life, and having it abundantly, like Jesus spoke of in John 10

The signs of our abundant life as disciples and as a community formed after the teachings of Christ and following the Spirit that God sent into the world are ones that look like Acts 2, where All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Let us have the courage today to hear Christ's call, listen to his voice, and live like our
scripture are calling us to, with love and hope. May it be so. Amen.