

## The Rev. Michael C. Fedewa

Easter 5 C  
May 6, 2007  
Acts 13:44-52  
Revelation 19:1, 4-9  
John 13:31-35

At least here in Grand Rapids this week, there have 2 major topics of conversation this past week. The first has been the hassles due to road construction. How much time have you spent either stuck on 131—or finding yourself winding your way through some detour due to road construction.

The other topic of course has been the price of gas. Hasn't it been shocking to witness how quickly and how sharply the price of gas has risen? Early in the week I bought gas for \$2.85. Then I watched it rise to \$2.90, \$3.00, \$3.15, \$3.25. Yesterday I saw people were lined up because the price had dropped to \$3.18 per gallon.

Thinking about the traffic headaches and the price of gas has made me more committed to remind people to vote for the transportation millage on Tuesday. Not only do I believe that providing access to transportation is an issue of justice, but more and better mass transit will help cut down traffic congestion and the amount of fuel we burn, and can be part of our effort to care for the environment. Not only did I think about the Transportation millage but I even bought myself a 30 day pass for the GR bus system. Friday, I took the bus downtown and back. My goal is to become more and more acquainted with the system and to begin to use it more and more regularly in the weeks months and years to come.

Thinking about the average price of a gallon of gas got me thinking about some of the other costs that are part of life. What is the average price of a meal eaten at home, compared to one eaten out? What is the average cost of a college education? The average cost of a hospital stay, the average costs spent by a family for prescription drugs...the average cost of a trip to a baseball game? The average cost of a home, a car, a vacation. What is the average cost of giving birth in the United States. What is the average cost of dying? A quick Google will give easy access to this.

While thinking about such costs, I was reflecting also on this morning's reading from Revelation. Our reading speaks of the marriage of the lamb and his bride and of being invited to this marriage supper. I wondered as I read the revelation text about the average cost for a wedding today in the United States. I found that while statistics vary, it appears that the average cost is moving toward \$30,000. This average does include tuxes, dresses, receptions, flowers, music, pictures, jewelry, limos. It does not include honeymoon, nor does it include the costs incurred by guests...their transportation costs, their lodging, gifts, new clothes purchased. When all the costs associated with wedding celebrations are included the average overall costs may double, it may go even higher. It is truly mind boggling isn't it. The price of a wedding almost makes the price of a gallon of gas look cheap. (Almost)

What is perhaps obvious, but still needs to be said is that the price of a wedding, be it 20-30-40 thousand or more, has absolutely nothing to do with whether or not the marriage that is celebrated will be successful. What makes a marriage successful, what gives a marriage its glory is not the amount of money spent, but is the presence of love. And, the glory of a marriage does not come on that first day, in first week, the first month or even the first year, the true glory of a marriage comes after decades and decades of growing in love.

The presence of love makes a \$100 wedding every bit as glorious as a \$100,000. Love gives glory to marriage. John's Gospel this morning is about Glory. Jesus is entering into the hour of his glory. This is the hour that he has been preparing for all his life. It is the hour of his suffering and death; the hour in which he will be glorified. Doesn't it surprise you that after all Jesus has done: Jesus has cured the sick. He has calmed the storms; he has multiplied bread and fed thousands. Jesus has even raised the dead. Now, only now at the hour of his death, does Jesus speak of being glorified.

Now is the hour of his death, the hour of his glory?

This is the hour of his glory, because in his suffering and death, Jesus reveals the depth of his love. In his death Jesus reveals God's love for the world. God comes to earth and dies to show us the power of love. In his death, Jesus reveals his love for his father...he fulfills his mission given by his father by sharing completely in human life and death. In his death, Jesus reveals his love for his friends. Greater love than this no one has, than that they lay down their life for their friends.

His death is his moment of glory, because in his death, Jesus reveals the glorious power of love.

It is love that gives glory to the life of Jesus. There is nothing more glorious than love.

Our Gospel today ends with the command to love each other as Jesus has loved us. It is in this love that we witness to Jesus. Through this love, we will be known as disciples.

While I wondered about the staggering costs of gas, of weddings, I began thinking about the average costs associated with religious organizations and churches. My mind cannot comprehend how much churches in this city, this county, this country spend each year---billions, trillions perhaps. We spend it on salaries, and buildings, publicity and programs. And I pray to God, most churches give a fair portion to care for the poor and the needy. And, what is obvious in weddings is just as obvious in churches. What brings glory to a church is not the size of its budget, not how much it spends, but how much it loves.

What proves the people of St. Andrews are disciples of Jesus is how much we love.

It is love that brings glory...not size, not splendor, not programs. Love scripture proclaims that is expressed in patience and kindness.

- Love that does not insist on its own way.
- Love that is not arrogant, rude, jealous, or irritable.
- Love that rejoices in the right, love that endures.
- Love that forgives.
- Love that welcomes the stranger, clothes the naked, feeds the hungry.
- Love that seeks justice and peace.
- Love that is willing to set aside one's own needs for the common good, for the needs of others.
- Love that cares for all that God has created.

It is love that proves we are disciples. Where ever there is love, the glory of God is revealed.

Dear friends, the costs of life are staggering. Gas, travel, weddings, funerals, and even the costs associated with Churches.

But, dear friends, remember, staggering costs do not bring glory.

True glory, God's glory, Eternal glory is rooted in love.

May our love prove that we are disciples. May love be our glory.