

## The Rev. Michael C. Fedewa

7th Sunday of Easter

May 20, 2007

Acts 16:16-34

Rev. 22:12-20

John 17:20-26

As I said a couple weeks back, I am in the process of learning how to ride the Grand Rapids public transportation system. I am in between my first bus trip and really becoming an expert bus rider. Each day, each trip really I discover something new. Sometimes I catch myself making a silly mistake....like waiting impatiently for a bus that was 15 minutes late only to discover that the reason it was late is that I was reading the weekend instead of the weekday schedule. Also last week, I boarded the bus only to discover that I had left my monthly pass at home...great place for it eh? So, on that trip, I discovered how to pay for an individual ticket, I learned that you don't need exact change, and that, instead of change, you are given a card that records your credit, that can be used the next time you purchase a ticket. Every day I discover something new.

My big discovery this week came late Tuesday afternoon. I had stopped at the Family Fare on Leonard and Fuller to buy a couple of grocery items. I checked my handy dandy bus schedule and discovered that I was about 20 minutes early for the next scheduled bus. I was in between buses. What should I do? I sat for about 5 minutes and then decided. What the heck, as long as I was just sitting, I might as well walk along the route headed for home and catch the bus at one of the later stops. Not only would I then save money on gas, but I would also get some exercise. So, I started walking. I made it to the first stop in about 7 minutes. Now what? Do I head for the next stop or wait at this one? What happens if I start walking and am "in between stops" when the bus comes? Will I be able to run and catch the bus....bum leg and all? What should I do? Am I better off standing and waiting or should I start walking to the next stop? I tried to peek and see where that next stop was.....but....I could not see it. Was trying to make it there worth the risk?

Well, I decided to give it a try. I am not going to tell you whether or not I made it to the next stop before the bus came.....that's a secret between God and me...but, as I was walking I began to think about how being "in between" was a very dangerous place to be.

Think of all the in between moments in life; those life moments when you are between a rock and a hard place; in between times are filled with questions.

I think of those moments between jobs or careers. The previous job might have been good or bad. But, after you have left that job and before you start the next, you might find yourself in a pretty vulnerable place. You worry whether or not you will find another job, and what sort of job will it be. How will you survive financially?

The same is true of relationships; when one finds oneself newly single. Perhaps after the death of a spouse or partner; perhaps after a break up -- perhaps after a divorce, a person is very vulnerable. When will they be ready to begin a new relationship? Will they ever find a new relationship? Will they move too quickly?

In between relationships is a very vulnerable place to be.

Parents know the vulnerabilities that children face "in between": in between childhood and adolescence when the child begins to experience new freedoms. They are no longer children, but not quite adults. They are in between. They are middle schoolers, in between elementary school and secondary school. They are old enough not to have baby sitters....but....not yet adults. How much responsibility can they handle?

I am sure there are dozens and dozens and dozens of other examples of the dangers and vulnerabilities faced when one is "in between".

Today is an “in between” Sunday in the Church year. Last Thursday was the feast of the Ascension; the feast on which we celebrate the resurrected Jesus leaving this earth and returning to his Father. Next Sunday is the Feast of Pentecost, when Jesus sends his Holy Spirit to lead and guide the followers of Jesus until Jesus returns in glory. We are in between Jesus leaving and the Spirit coming. We are between Jesus first coming among us as a man, and his return in the fullness of his glory. We are between the victory Jesus won over evil through his death and resurrection and the fullness of that victory that will be achieved when all creation shares his victory. We are in between what God has already accomplished and what is not yet complete.

Our readings capture this in between time.

Revelation speaks to a community of Christians in the late 1st century that is in danger. They are facing persecution and martyrdom. Jesus is the first and the last, the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end. Revelation is written to those in between the first and the last, those who are in danger and suffering in the meantime. Do not lose hope, your reward is coming. You will be rewarded for your faithfulness.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus prays for the Apostles that will be left behind when he returns to the Father. He prays that even as he lives them, even as he goes to prepare a place for them, that they will not lose hope, they will not despair.....because, even as he leaves them bodily, he will send them his spirit and remain with them. Even as he leaves, he will send his spirit that will guide them in the between times. Even as he leaves them, the love of God will remain with them.

In the reading from Acts, the community of Jesus disciples is in between. They are advocating customs that are new. They are living a new way of life, in the face of old customs. They are in between a set of customs that are known and accepted and custom that are not yet established. The crowd responds by beating them and imprisoning them. The jailer is in between one way of life.....keeping guard at a prison. But, he witnesses a power that is greater than a Roman justice as the chains are unfastened and the doors thrown open. He is in between, and he is in danger. He prepares to kill himself when Paul rescues him, and baptizes him into the loving embrace of the discipleship community.

My friends, I believe that we are living in an in between time. So much of the way we understood the world is gone and past:

- our relationship with those who are different than we;
- our understanding of what it means to be an American.....no longer primarily white, European, Christian;
- our relationship with the earth, and creation itself;
- our relationship with those of different countries, those of different faiths.

It is all changing so rapidly. The way we saw the world 50 years ago, 40 years ago, 5 years ago is past and our new way of relating is still coming to be. We are in a dangerous, vulnerable time. We are in between. There are so many questions.

On this 7th Sunday of Easter: Sunday....The Sunday in between when Jesus ascended and when he sent the Holy Spirit. We celebrate that He is present in all the in between times. We believe that Jesus was there in the beginning and that he will be there at the end. We believe that he was first and that he will be last. We believe also, that by his spirit he is here with us. We believe that he is here in the words of Scripture. We believe that he is present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. We believe that he speaks to us in our own hearts and in the hearts of those we love. We believe that she is present in the news of the day, in creation and in one another.

So, let us live in confidence and hope. Wherever we find ourselves: in between jobs, in between relationships, in between yesterday and tomorrow, even in between bus stops. We believe that wherever we are between here and there, between where we are and where we will be, between where the world was and where it is going.....we believe that we and all persons of all time are held in the loving hands of God.