

ACPC Zech. 6:9-13; John 14:15-21; (20:22) Feb. 9, 2014

Ten years ago I was privileged to be here for the 150th anniversary celebration. And in God's awesome providence we are all here again for yet another commemoration of the dedication of this congregation.

- Ten years ago Penny and I were accompanied by our granddaughter Sofia, who was just a couple weeks' shy of her second birthday. Always comfortable in church, she made her way around the fellowship hall charming people; sitting in many laps; asking many questions.
- Sofia is now just a couple of weeks' shy of her twelfth birthday. She's a 6th grader. I'm happy to report that she's still charming; she's smart; she's engaging – a joy to be with.
- Sofia is one of the founders of a lunch table group known as the SAPs. Seems that one of them was called a sap by someone at school and the group decided if THAT one was a sap, then they were all saps. And not knowing what a sap was (or is) they contrived their own definition – saps are Supremely Awesome People.
- The Supremely Awesome People originated at one lunch table but now has spread to a second table. One of the SAPs is developing a web site and has connected with other SAPs in other towns. Imagine: a network of Supremely Awesome People who are looked down upon by some of their peers.
- Sofia and her SAP comrades **are** Awesome! They are the ones who follow the rules, do their homework, respect their teachers, and are nice to everyone. They all read a lot (especially science fiction); they watch Star Trek; and have lively discussions about the universe and its possibilities.. A couple of them play the violin; one plays a homemade ukelele; another plays a steel drum that his dad made out of a discarded propane tank. (Sofia is wondering if there's classical music written for violin, ukelele, and steel drum. If not, why not?)
- One of the SAP girls wears a t-shirt that declares: Stay Weird!

A professor friend who knows about such things tells me that the word “weird” comes from the Gaelic and means “one foot in another world” and it’s not a derogatory description. The Gaels understood that there are different ways of being; different “worlds” if you will. One foot in another world; a mystery; a Way of being guided by the unseen.

- From the Christian perspective, this other world is God’s world – the Creation as God intends it to be. All God’s children living together certain of their identities; trusting that God is in control and IS bringing the Divine Will into being in our very lives.
- And what is the Divine will? To redeem God’s Creation – reclaim the world and make it perfect again. And then -- then! establish Jesus Christ as Lord of that redeemed Creation. And one more thing: God would have all God’s children living in this mission. Redeemed Creation. Another world – God’s world. Weird!
- In God’s great providence we are together for this celebration. Cars parked all over; under trees; on the lawn. People carrying in food. Sounds of “Father Abraham” drifting out... There will be some who drive past and shake their heads and think, “Weird people.”

February 4, 1854. Dedication of the Allison Creek Presbyterian congregation.

- People gathered – people who we would recognize as 19th century Americans – we would understand them – BUT they were different than we. **Very** different. They were millers & blacksmiths; shoe makers, wagon makers; tanners and growers of cotton. Railroad workers. Farm laborers. They arrived in buggies and buckboards; some on horseback; some on foot. They wore frock coats and long dresses and hats.
- They heard a sermon preached by the Rev. J.M.H. Adams on the Zechariah passage read by Sam. I don't know a thing about Rev. Adams. We can be sure that he preached much longer than I will – probably about three times as long!
- Who knows how Rev. Adams and his congregation understood the Zechariah text? The King James version sounds much different than a current translation of the Bible. The Message – Eugene Peterson's translation, reads like this: *“A Message from God-of-the Angel-Armies. Be alert. We have a man here whose name is Branch. He will branch out from where he is and build the Temple of God. Then he'll assume the role of royalty, take his place on the throne and rule – a priest sitting on the throne! – showing that king and priest can coexist in harmony.”*
- God's Branch, establishing a throne upon which he sits and rules as king and priest. Now, who might that be?..I'm sure that Rev. Adams and I and you will agree that Zechariah was pointing ahead to Jesus, sitting on his throne in heaven as priest and King. And in spite of the fact that our external realities differ, I'm sure that we and they would agree that we are called **INTO** Jesus' world where Jesus rules– a much different world than the one we know.
- This different world has been called the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God; been called God's Realm and God's Reign. Whatever the name, we're talking about the Creation as God intends it to be. All God's children living together, certain of being loved; trusting that God is in control and is bringing the Divine Will into being within our everyday lives.
- As different as we are from those Allison Creek Presbyterians of 160 years ago, we have these certainties in common.

Sound weird? Of course it's weird. A foot in another world – the world of God's territory; of God's rules.

- A world where a homeless carpenter speaks for God; acts for God
- A world in which the ritually righteous are far from God and the prostitutes and tax gatherers are close to God

- A realm in which the lame walk, the blind see, and the hungry are fed at God's banquet table
- A reality in which death is not the final act.

This is the Other World we share with Christians in 1854, and with those in 1254, in 754, and 54. Even though the external surroundings of all these people were different, the "other world" – God's world, is the same for all of us. Goes back to Jesus' promise to the disciples to send God's Spirit to be with them. I will send you the Advocate, he said, the Spirit of Truth to be with you forever!

On the Day of Resurrection, the disciples confused and terrified, Jesus appeared to them in their hiding place and said, *"Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you."* Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. *"Receive the Holy Spirit,"* he said.

- On the Day of Resurrection, Jesus made good on all his promises. "Receive the Holy Spirit." He replaced himself with himself and he remains with his people in 54, 754, 1254, 1854, and 2014!

Listen Allison Creek! Hear what God wants always for you to know:

- You are special! Just like those who gathered here in 1854, you are loved by God. You are precious to God!
- You have God's Spirit within you. God will show you what to do and God has something for you to do.
- And God has something for you to be as a community: Weird people! God's people – people with one foot in God's world.
- People who are a sign of God's future.
- People always open to the guidance of the Spirit within.
- People certain that God is trustworthy and that God will keep all the Divine promises.

Something weird is coming: God's rule; God's Realm; Peace, Justice, Plenty. We don't know when. Soon, perhaps. Later, maybe. But coming. Continue as you began – as God's beloved. God's Spirit-led people. Continue with one foot in God's world. God is counting on you. God's new world is counting on you.

Let us pray: Gracious God, You have called each of us into your reality; your new world where Jesus reigns and your will is done. We celebrate today the faithfulness of those who went before and pledge ourselves to that same faithfulness. Your will be done, God. And let it be done in us. Amen.