

Last Sunday I shared in the celebration of the 125th anniversary of Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington where I served from 2003 to 2008. The theme chosen for the occasion and year was, "In the city and on our way". Part fact and part vision and certainly compelling.

It is indeed remarkable to think of a Christian congregation that many years on the same corner (Ninth and Stewart) in downtown Seattle in determined, faithful service! But so they have, remaking themselves time and again.

They and we stand in a long procession of generations of persons who have taken up the invitation to follow Jesus on his way, in his purpose.

In the Gospel reading for this day, Jesus, warned by the religious leaders that he was in danger would not be detoured from his purpose, even by Herod the "fox!" The threats of violence will not intimidate him or dissuade him, as Luke records, from "**casting out demons and performing cures.**"

In other words, he will continue bringing the news of and embodying the life God wants for all human kind: *liberation* from the demons that imprison, *healing* in body, mind and soul, and offering life-giving *community* with God and one another.

As we are invited to follow Jesus we then share his emotion, i.e., his passionate concern for humankind. In the gospel reading we see how grieved God is with our arrogance and timidity, lamenting "**Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem**" over the cities and nations that stone and kill the messengers of peace! History confirms that fact and the present is little different.

And yet, God in Christ is undeterred, persisting in purpose, sending the Spirit to empower and lead the next generation who have taken up their place in that procession.

Which of course includes us, us young'uns, a mere ninety years in determined, faithful service in the name of Christ! We are not, nor have we ever been perfect, but this congregation has been true to the purpose of Christ in this city by bringing the news of and embodying the life of God's liberating, healing and embracing love for all.

All of which takes courage. "**Get away from here [said some Pharisees to Jesus] Herod wants to kill you.'** He said to them, '**Go and tell that fox for me. . .today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way.'**"

We are called in Christ into God's purpose and we too live and work under the divine necessity: "I must be on my way." You can be certain that there will be pressures along the way seeking to disrupt and dismantle our faithfulness, from within as well as from outside.

So let us take courage from the faithfulness of our ancestors Abraham and Sarah, from Paul and the brothers and sisters of Philippi, from Gethsemane in Seattle, Grace and University in Palo Alto, Messiah in Redwood City, from all our sister congregation of this Synod and the 10 thousand plus congregations of this church and breathe deeply of the Spirit's presence.

For that Spirit poured out over all the earth is vigorously refreshing and renewing us in purpose and leading in the journey!

Come to the table of Christ and be nourished for the journey of faith.