

Christ Did It Right the First Time 24 Pentecost B

We celebrate our life together today with the thought that Christ offered himself once for sin. He did what it took to get the job done and he did it once very well.

This is not always true when it comes to getting quality work done these days. We hired students from UW to paint our house this year. And they had to come back when they forgot to paint a section of deck railing. An electrician hooking up electric for a trailer burned out an inverter and that too took several visits and replacements to get the job done correctly.

Great care was given to the work of saving humanity. It took a master craftsman. It was horrible, painful and dirty work on the part of a carpenter from Galilee. He got the job done. Thankfully he did a complete job once and for all. It never will be repeated. His work is guaranteed for eternity. Like a will left for our benefit we have inherited the results of such great work from the high priest named Jesus.

So thorough was Christ's good work God no longer remembers or keeps record of past wrongs. We have forgiveness of sin. We have confidence to enter the heavenly sanctuary when we worship. We can approach God with a true heart. Hymn 410, "Praise my soul the King of heaven" expresses the confidence and assurance we have that we are "ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven." All this Jesus hammered out for us on the cross. Like a good contractor a guarantee on His work came with the cross.

With any guarantee on work done there is often a written contract. Products we purchase carry a warranty on workmanship. Have you notified God that the work Christ has done for you were well worth the cost? Why would we not at least say thank you for a job well done!

The letter to the Hebrews suggests a proper response to God for such good work. "Hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering." Holding fast is one of those things we do when looking down a steep cliff, or about ready to plunge down the tracks of a roller coaster. We don't easily let go of the guard rail. Hands must be pried off the safety bar after a rough ride on that roller coaster. Turbulence in an airplane can be that way as well. Holding fast to what gives assurance and hope is a challenge. Losing our grip on our security is

scary but we do our best when we pray, worship and hold to the safety bar that Jesus gave us – His cross! The cross is a faithful reminder of God's guarantee that he will not let us go!

The letter to Hebrews contains another response to God's good work for us: "Provoke one another to love and good deeds." This kind of provocation is like being at a pool party. Generally someone you know is going to get pushed over the side. It might be a way for some people to make you feel special. A loving prod is just that – it is in good fun. Surprise birthdays are like that too. I knew a woman whose husband made it clear that his wife did not like surprises. It totally embarrassed the woman and it would cause her to shut down. That may be hard for some of us to imagine. Yet we must be careful to find ways to prod and provoke in loving and caring ways so good deeds are not forced but come naturally.

Encouragement is a big part of doing a good job, whether it's flowers, a bulletin, teaching a class or singing an anthem. We need to know if what we are doing is working well. This is true for children as well as adults. We all need to meet each other, fellowship and find out what's going on in one another's lives. Did you know that a fellowship is two or more ships meeting on the water for a tea party? Hah! But I got you thinking!

When we don't see someone during worship for some time is there some wonderful way to tell that person or persons that they are missed? Pink flamingoes on a yard could be a way. Sunday school classes love to do that. A card where a member of a family is missing from a table could be another way. It can be lots of fun to be creative. Whatever way you choose to be loving and do good we are reminded to keep meeting for huddles. That's right. Didn't you know that having church is another way to play football? We huddle and we pass the ball around until we can figure out how to get the ball through the goal. Is that not what church is supposed to do? Okay, some of us have extraordinary imaginations!

While Jesus got the job done right and once and for all, we must keep working at what we do best. Keep smiling while you do. Keep encouraging and loving and provoking one another for the Day of Christ's coming gets much closer every year. Amen.