

### **Make a Wish**

Ephesians 4:1-3, 31-32

Remember the story of Aladdin and the magic lamp? When he rubs the lamp, the genie appears and tells Aladdin he will grant Aladdin three wishes. Each time Aladdin makes a wish, you remember the genie's response? Sure: "Your wish is my command."

The night before he was killed, Jesus made a wish. Not exactly like Aladdin, but not that different, either. After he had washed the disciples' feet, and broke the bread and shared the cup, he said this to his disciples:

*This is my commandment – that you love one another as I have loved you.*

Jesus' wish is also his command to us. He wants us to be one, unified, a body whose different parts all work in harmony and coordination. In fact, he not only expresses that wish to his disciples, including us; he also makes that wish to God just after he says it to the disciples. He's leaving them, and his parting wish to them and to God is that they not let conflicts and disagreements overcome their love, that they would be one, even as Jesus and his Father are one.

And he's not the only one in the New Testament to make that wish. Paul makes it over and over again in his letters. I picked one of many places where he makes his wish to the church in Ephesus:

Mak[e] every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice,<sup>32</sup> and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

First John says it even more strongly:

Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.

Today, we say that this is our wish, too.

After the Second World War, with much of the world in ruins and the human race reeling from this global war, the Protestant churches got together and tried to find a way to bring healing: to speak a word that would re-affirm the oneness of the human race. And the idea they came up with was not a political movement but a day on which the Christians around the world would acknowledge and celebrate their oneness at the Lord's Table in the sacrament of communion. It is one of the church's better ideas of the twentieth century — that on the first Sunday of October, Christians all around the world join hands and say that there is one thing we have in common that is stronger than all our differences: Jesus Christ.

It is a means of saying that we have a wish, and it is the same wish as the one voiced by the one we call Lord. We take the bread, remembering his body broken to make peace between his Father and the world. We drink the cup, remembering his blood shed take break down the wall of sin that separated us from his Father. It was Jesus' wish that we be reconciled to his Father, and that we be reconciled to one another.

We all know the wonderful work of that organization called the Make-a-Wish Foundation. They find out the great desire, the great wish of children with terminal diseases, and they make that wish come true...they *make* the wish. That is the meaning of the title of this sermon. We gather here on this World Communion not simply to wish for greater unity in the world; not simply to wish for greater unity in the church. We gather here on this sacred Sunday to here Jesus make a wish that we would love one another as he loves us; to hear Paul wish that we would "make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" to hear John wish that we would not be hypocrites, saying we love God but we don't love each other.

And our response should be the same as the genie to Aladdin: "Your wish is my command." Like the Make-a-Wish foundation, our task is to make that wish a reality. If we are willing to take this bread and this cup, symbols of the broken body and shed blood through which Jesus Christ has made peace with us, if we are willing to receive his peace, we must be willing to make his wish come true in our relationships with one another.

I feel confident that there is not a person in this room who does not have someone he or she needs to forgive. Someone has hurt you and you have not completely let go it. I mean truly forgive – let go of the right to hurt them back, see them as a whole person and not define them by what they did to

you, pray for God's blessings for them and really mean it. That is true forgiveness. And I'm betting that there is someone you have not completely done that for.

But, if I am wrong and there are a couple of you who have made peace with everyone who has ever hurt you, I know I am right about this one: every single one of us has done something to hurt someone else and we have not fully tried to make peace for it. We have not confessed it, asked forgiveness for it, and attempted to make up for it in some way that shows we truly are sorry we did it.

For the vast majority of us, both things are true. There may be a spiritual giant or two among us who only has one of those two things that are true, but, for the rest of us, we've got work to do in both directions – forgiving those who have hurt us, and seeking the forgiveness of those whom we have hurt.

So, here's my assignment, my *wish* for you this morning. As you take that bread which is Jesus' broken, peacemaking body, and then you sip that cup which is Jesus' blood shed for sins, and then you sit there in those quiet moments of meditation, think about someone you need to forgive and say in a prayer to Jesus: "Your wish is my command." And begin the process of forgiving that person this morning. Or think about someone you have wronged whom you need to ask forgiveness of, not only in words, but in deed, showing them you are truly sorry for what you did and that you won't do it again. Begin the process of repentance that might lead to forgiveness and reconciliation with that person.

Say to Jesus in your meditation time that you agree with his wish for peace and unity among his followers and, indeed, the entire world. And then pray the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi in whatever words come to you:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy;  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

Amen.

© 2010, Ken Broman-Fulks