

## Daring Church

May 30, 2010 – Maritime Conference Annual Meeting Sunday  
Psalm 8 and John 13:31-35

### First, a sermonette for our new ministers:

To escape criticism – do nothing, say nothing, be nothing.

*- Elbert Hubbard, American writer, satirist, artist, philosopher, keen proponent of the early arts and crafts movement*

If you find yourself being criticized in the midst of your ministry, know that means you are doing something, something that probably needs to be done.

Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing.

*- Albert Schweitzer*

As certainty know this: what you do, how you live will preach many more clearly understood sermons than your mouth ever will – whether you mean that to be the case or not.

And, these words of Sarah Hall Maney, written in 1982, might serve as a more contemporary and contextual reflection of Psalm 8:

You are an original blessing...

God danced

On the day (you were) born, God danced.

Did you really, God?

Was it a ritualistic, dignified bow-from-the-waist kind of dance?

Or was it just possibly a wild and crazy arm-flinging kind of thing?

Did you pronounce somberly that here was another ‘good girl (boy)’ that you had created?

Or did you yell and holler and grab the guy on the corner to let him know that this time you had really done it!

This time you created a winner...

This one was going to go all the way!

I hope you did, God...

I really hope you did.

Now, a sermon for all of us:

In his book The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus, Peter Gomes tells of a preaching assignment he had in a very prestigious church. Of the occasion, he writes:

“...just as the rector and I were about to proceed to our prayers before the service, a wildly disoriented young man burst into the room. He spoke loudly...nonsensically, seemingly either ‘on’ or ‘off’ something. Whatever it was...his erratic behaviour was familiar to (my host), who treated him with enormous but firm courtesy and let the little tantrum run its course. The intruder left as abruptly as he had arrived, and while I was shaken the rector was not, and was clearly used to the interruption. As we pulled ourselves back together, his thoughtful comment to me was, ‘I keep hoping (he) isn’t Jesus.’” (pg 197)

**The greatest commandment?**

Jesus says: "Love God with your whole being."

**The second?**

Jesus says: "Love your neighbour as you love yourself."

**The new?**

Jesus offers: "Love as I have loved you. By this (kind of loving) all people will know that you are my disciples."

Today's gospel text reminds us that self-giving loving of all others is the essence of following Jesus.

The what of doing our ministry is very clear.

The how varies with each succeeding generation.

Mark Twain said: "It is not what I don't understand in the Bible that troubles me; it is what is perfectly clear that does."

**WHAT** - Love one another as I have loved you. This is how all people will know that you are my disciples.

Note that Jesus offers this new commandment between his prediction of Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial.

Note also that Jesus condemns neither disciple.

**HOW** - in our time, is it perhaps staying the course of '*radical*' hospitality, *Jesus' kind of hospitality* - no conditions, no limits, no less will do

Peter Gomes: "To love God is one thing...what is it to love what (...as) God loves?"

Jesus says, "By this (kind of loving) all people will know that you are my disciples", i.e., followers, students

Not good at this loving, this radical hospitality? Then **be encouraged:**

"Forgiveness is the name of love practised among people who love poorly." - *J.M. Henri Houwen*

Love one another - the only NEW commandment the gospels report Jesus offering

Love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples.

Today - still, our gospel text speaks of and to a **daring church.**

It speaks in support of the practices in which we have been immersed over this past weekend:

- radical hospitality
- passionate worship
- extravagant generosity
- intentional faith development
- risk-taking mission and service

Practices which we are all invited to undertake in our ministries where we are as we are.

Foundational to all of this, motivation for all of this - LOVE! The strengthening, healing, daring love of Jesus - the love of all God's people!