

CMCL Scattered and Authorized
Urbane Peachey
Nov. 13, 2016
Mark 8:27-30 Matt. 16:13-20, Luke 9:18-20
(Silence—Ruth Marcus—a universal prayer from the Jewish tradition)

"Creator of all flesh, bless all the inhabitants of our country with Your spirit. May citizens of all races and creeds forge a common bond in true harmon, to banish hatred and bigotry and to safeguard the ideals and free institutions that are the pride and lory of our country."

(Prepared sermon before election—but the acoustics in which we hear it is different)

There are two kinds of churches in the world, those who serve half and half in coffee fellowship, and those who serve bland powder creamer. I come to CMCL because there is real milk. Another thing I like is the two service options. But that presents a character building issue—if you don't see me you assume that I was at the other service, but perhaps I was not here at all.

Seriously what I appreciate is the great variety of people-personality, experience, vocation and education etc. So I rise today to celebrate you, a people **Scattered and Authorized. The text is the occasion to consider what we represent when we scatter.** Pastor Gascho Gooke, asked me to help out for a day in the absence of an Assoc. Pastor. Consider then, one of the most vigorous and bushy tailed passages in the four Gospels.

"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" I will focus on the question only, not the rumored answers given by the disciples, recorded in Matthew only. I am making a spiritual connection between the church gathered and the church scattered.

Maybe most of us are like Jesus...a little snoopy—we would really like to know what others think of us, and sometimes we are told without asking. Five or so years ago, I happened to meet Mayor Gray downtown. "Why do I know that name?" he said. "Maybe you've seen my letters to the editor," I replied. "Oh," he said good naturedly, "you are one of those trouble makers." One thing lead to another and eventually he joined me us a trouble maker to speak at a Lancaster Interchurch Peace Witness forum as an advocate for reasonable gun legislation.

The passage Matthew passage also appears in shortened form in Mark and Luke. Matthew is the only one who discloses the answer within Jesus' question, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" The Greek word is word is *anthropos* "Son of Humanity." (Haven't we had enough of "Man.") Son of humanity appears over 80 times in the four Gospels. Jesus refers to himself as son of humanity, more than 70 times. Jesus never refers to himself directly as "Son of God." Why didn't we grow up with a "son of humanity theology." We have heard much, much more about obscure passages. The Son of Man term is prominent in Hebrew Scripture. Psalm 8 attributes supreme value to human beings—What are human beings that you are mindful of them says NRSV. Son of man/humanity is simply an extraordinary, anointed person with a God given assignment in a pivotal time in history. You are all sons and daughters of humanity.

The question is forceful because of the place where Jesus asks the question. Caesarea Philippi was located at the foot of Mt. Hermon in Gentile country, northeast of the Sea of Galilee. The city was named after Octavian, (Caesar) who had subdued Antony and Cleopatra and then became Caesar Augustus-the highest one. He was the adopted son of Julius Caesar (Julius Caesar was deified after his death) hence, Caesar becomes “Son of God.”

Secondly The city was known as the “Rock of the Gods”, because of the many shrines to Caesar, and the Roman gods. There was a cave there called “Gates of Hades”, because it was believed that Baal would enter and leave the underworld through places where water gushed out of the side of the mountain. Jesus uses the force of the immediate scene to say the “Gates of Hades” would not prevail against the church. Naturally, orthodox Jewish rabbis, taught that no good Jew would ever visit there.

My focus is on what happens when we scatter, but one application to our present. IN JESUS, humanity is supremely valued. The many references to Jesus as son of man give us a strong “theology of humanity.” In Jesus humanity is supremely valued. In capitalism and communism alike humanity that does not contribute to the state is dispensable. I intend a strong critique of the way men, women and children are neglected, diminished and discarded in the unbridled American Capitalist system. Neglect devolves into a drug culture, gang warfare, mass incarceration and sacrifice of men and women in foreign wars. It is tragic because private and public sectors together have the capacity to prevent massive strips of poverty and impoverishment of the human spirit while wealth accumulates in massive strips of greed.

But I am here to celebrate the rich diversity of CMCL folk in our vocations and the communities or institutions where we work. We are authorized as we scatter just as Jesus is authorized, going up against this citadel of idolatry, at Caesarea Phillipi to clarify his identity. His authorization flows out of his identity, and from identity, comes Grit: *The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, in the language of a current best seller by Angela Duckworth

We too are authorized sons and daughters of humanity, and it is OK to ask “who do people say that I, the son or daughter of humanity, am?” We have churchy things we say about ourselves, like the membership commitment and our core values but these things are said in a bubble, unknown to the mayor, Lanc. County Planning Commission, or your employer. People don’t know what songs we sing in this sacred place but they know a lot about the song we sing in the work place. The people of CMCL are better known scattered than gathered...

Now I selected several persons from each service to rise and explain who they are—

First Service—read by Carol Spicher

Dr. Jim Spicher: My names is Jim Spicher , I live in Mountville PA .

I am an internist and geriatrician. I care for people as they enter the twilight of their lives. I walk with them as they navigate the many losses and joys of this phase of life.

Sue Stoesz-First Service

I live on Pleasure Road in Grandview Heights

I teach second grade at Smoketown Elementary School

We have a combination of affluence and poverty.

51% receive free and reduced lunch

11 Smoketown students are currently homeless

Smoketown is in the Conestoga Valley School District which currently has 37 homeless students

There are 30 Smoketown students on the ESL roster at the moment.

Our languages represented are:

Arabic (Egypt, Iraq)

Spanish (Puerto Rico, Cuba)

Tigrinya (Eritrea)

Amharic (Ethiopia)

Khmer (Cambodian)

Chinese

Vietnamese

Gujarati (India)

Turkish (Turkey)

John Kanagy, First Service

Live in Hamilton Park on southwest side of Lancaster.

I retired about 2 years ago as an Occupational Therapist working with seniors in retirement communities. The goals were to assist folks back to health and prior functional level to return home or prior level of care.

Presently, I am working with Lancaster Downtowners as a volunteer coordinator for our Just One Call benefit. This service connects volunteers to assist members with transportation, yard work, technical support for phones and computers, or other tasks that have become difficult to complete due to a temporary disability, illness or the effects of aging. Our goal is to assist each other with meeting social and physical needs to enable living full, meaningful lives in our own homes in Lancaster City as long as possible.

Dr. Ron Umble First service

336D N. Christian St.

Lancaster, PA 17602

I'm a mathematician, which means I make my livelihood by thinking about and teaching mathematics. I like math and I'm fairly good at it, but I'm no genius. I can't multiply three digit numbers in my head. And I can't recite the first one hundred decimal digits of pi. As a friend of

mine once exclaimed after getting to know me a bit, “Why, you’re just an average guy!” Yep, that’s me... just an average guy. So why math of all things? What’s the attraction? Well, math is the language we use to describe and make sense of the physical world – God’s creation. Perfection in creation reflects the perfection of the Creator. As I work with mathematical ideas and watch as they fit together to form a perfect whole, I catch a glimpse of the Creator. I’m awestruck and humbled. Truly God is near!

Teaching mathematics affords me the opportunity to share the ideas I love with young active and inquisitive minds, and to equip them with the skills they need to launch their careers. Years later, when former students return to say “Thank you,” I realize that my relationships with my students have made a difference. What a joy!

In addition to teaching, I think about interesting problems, which, if solved, could potentially improve our lives. But research is a team effort. I collaborate with researchers in the USA (our own Barbara Nimershiem, to name one) and around the world. Working closely with people from other cultures and perspectives has enriched my life immeasurably, and I’m a better human being because of it.

Second Service

Mary S. Gattis, AICP

Director of Local Government Programs/LGAC Coordinator

Second service Mary Gattis lives and works in downtown Lititz in a little house, built around 1860.

Mary works for a nonprofit organization called the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. Her work, which is funded largely by the US EPA, involves facilitating dialogue among local, state and federal government around the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. She staffs a committee made up of local elected officials who's job is to advise their governors, or the Mayor in the case of the District of Columbia, about the needs and concerns of the more than 1,800 units of local government in the watershed. In its simplest terms Mary's job is about helping local governments be good stewards.

This work takes place throughout the 64,000 square mile watershed which includes portions of New York, West Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia.

AUDREY PATTERSON

I’m Audrey Patterson, I’ve been living in Lancaster City on east Clay Street since I returned to Lancaster county after working overseas with MCC.

I've worked as a Family Nurse Practitioner for South East Lancaster Health Services in a variety of ways for the past 10 years.

South East Lancaster Health Services is a Federally Qualified Health Center – a FQHC that provides health care for 22,000 patients with all types of insurance and there is also a sliding fee schedule for those who do not have insurance. We provide medical , obstetrical and dental services. At this point we are also doing all the initial care for new refugees. Lancaster county has become the home to the largest concentration of recently resettled immigrants in the state of Pennsylvania and it's been my privilege to meet and interact with many of them. Sometimes I think that once I decided to settle down and stop exploring the world, fate was then so kind as to bring the world to me!

Thank you for your gift today helping us connect mystically to who we are when we are scattered....May you feel valued and authorized as sons and daughters of humanity.

I ask nothing new from you. I only celebrate and give a name to who and what you already are. What I celebrate is your unknowing sacramental engagement in public life, just like we celebrate and give thanks for the bread and cup of Jesus' life in the service of communion. A sacrament is the mediation of the grace and goodness of God equally for all humanity.