

**Sermon for Christ & Grace Church Petersburg, VA
Proper 25, Year A, October 29, 2017
The Rev. Bill Queen
“Sharing Our Faith”
1 Thessalonians 2:1-8; Matthew 22:34-46**

today is the last of our four Sundays that we will have a Parishioner Testimonial, during announcement time, about why Christ and Grace is important to them; so my sermon today will be intentionally brief

‘evangelism’ is one of those words, like ‘stewardship’ is also, that usually causes Episcopalians to shrink out of sight beneath the pews; so maybe it is not surprising that ‘evangelism’ and ‘stewardship’ mean almost the same thing, at heart; and it is a very simple thing they mean: they both mean sharing your faith with other people; evangelism means sharing your faith through a message; stewardship means sharing your faith through your resources, and that includes the church’s buildings, staff, and activities that are supported by your financial gifts and by your participation, which all serve to share that message of the gospel; both evangelism and stewardship presume that our faith is inherently something that must be, that has to be, shared; we do have a tremendous responsibility to hand on, in every possible way, what has been entrusted to us by God, since it is not ours to keep for ourselves

Paul addresses this in today’s epistle reading; he talks about the necessary attitude of our hearts when we share our faith—an attitude that applies equally to sharing the gospel as to sharing our resources; he describes this approach as “gentle, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children;” does that sound a bit familiar?; remember the Bible verse your Every Member Canvass Committee chose for this year’s pledge drive? (hint, it has been on the announcements page of the bulletin every Sunday this month) “whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith” from Galatians 6:9-10; effective sharing of our faith requires us to look at people outside of the church as already part of our family, and our caring and compassion for them should be as if we were “tenderly caring for our own children”

Paul goes on with more to say about this attitude of the heart; “So deeply do

we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us;" again you see how it is caring and compassion for others that drives us to share our faith

and then we see Jesus addressing the same thing in today's gospel reading where he sums up God's law in these words: "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all your mind ... and love your neighbor as yourself;" and because he adds "on these two commandments hang all of the law and the prophets" it is very important to recognize that these two stand together as a unity; you can't choose one over the other; in fact, what Jesus is saying is that you cannot truly and fully love God unless you love your neighbor, nor can you truly and fully love your neighbor unless you love God

as we prepare to bring our stewardship season to a close next Sunday, when we will offer our pledge cards to God at the altar at both services, remember that your pledge is one way of sharing your faith; your pledge is one way of showing your caring and compassion for others; your pledge is one way that you demonstrate your love of God and your love of neighbor