Epiphany 6, Year A
Deuteronomy 30:15-20, 1 Corinthians 3:1-9, Matthew 5:21-37

“You are God’s field.” Well, God is certainly loving us this morning! Listen to what God is saying to us through Scripture: “You are God’s field.” Amidst the instability of our world, we don’t need to fear. Dread, trepidation, distress…we don’t need to live in that place. We don’t need to fear, because we can act…we can love and create and reason. We can listen to one another. We can seek the source and the context and the intent of each other’s point of view and so see more clearly the path to life-giving decisions. We listen with God’s love and so know how to enact God’s justice and righteousness. We trust in God’s love and so live in peace. “You are God’s field.”

1 Corinthians tells us this morning that we are dependent on God. “For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations?” We are human. We have a strong bias to being self-assured, independent thinkers which so easily leads us to tightly controlling our lives which so easily leads us to being defensive when our ideas are challenged. 1 Corinthians says, “So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” We are dependent upon God because God is the one who keeps loving us back to the place where we open our hearts to deep listening, to hearing the truth in one another. God offers all of us this great gift…to be God’s field where peace is palpable.

We are spiritual beings. It is how we are created. Part of the Divine Mystery that we can’t fully comprehend or explain is that God lives within us. Understanding our self as a
spiritual being is the prelude, the prologue, the preamble to living life. Understanding ourselves as spiritual beings informs how we live all of life. Here is a way to think about this truth. I love my children. But, I don’t simply love them. My love for them informs how I live my life with them. When they were children, I fed them and clothed them and comforted them and encouraged them and enjoyed them. I tried to keep them safe and guide them in good decision making and provide them with good healthcare and a good education. The same way in which love for children informs how we live life with them is the way our spirituality informs how we live all of life. Our spirituality points us to our connectedness with each other. We are all God’s children - created equally – all loved by God. We understand life more completely through one another. We endure challenges more easily supporting one another. We enjoy life more completely through one another.

So, how do we come to understanding our spirituality and how it informs all of life? In community. In our church community, we seek God, we seek understanding of what life is all about. We seek inspiration in how we live life – how we love, how we reconcile, how we endure, how we hope. Together, we seek God. Together, we experience God through one another. Together, we are God’s field, God’s love, justice and righteousness manifest in this world.

I want to tell you about a movie I saw recently. I really want you to go see it. The movie is *Hidden Figures*. It’s a great movie, based on the true story of three African-American women, brilliant mathematicians who were vital to the success of the U.S. space program in the 1960s. At that time, bathrooms were segregated, work areas were largely segregated, even coffee pots weren’t shared. It’s such an important story to hear…to celebrate these women and their accomplishments…to come face to face with injustice and so desire to effect change, to teach our
children, to engage in conversation to continue to break down the walls that divide us, to grow the Kingdom of God. I really want you to see this movie. And, I really want you to recognize that the way in which we share a great movie or book or article with family and friends because we know it will be inspiring to them is the same way we can share our love for St. Paul’s because we want our family and friends to get to be a part of a community that is meaningful and inspiring. We want our family and friends to know the peace of God’s love which is made manifest in community.

In January, we held a 4-week series here at St. Paul’s on Reconciliation. We had great discussions around how, in a divisive climate, we stay in relationship with family and friends with whom we disagree. Using a resource on reconciliation out of the Episcopal Divinity School by the Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, we talked about how Jesus brought people together from all different walks of life. He brought them together into community to love one another. It sounds almost trite…we should love one another. But, loving one another, as Jesus calls us to love, is deeply profound. This love “allows for differences, tolerates uncertainties, and respects the dignity of every human being.” This love stretches us because this “love is not about being right. It is about being in relationship.” This love is not about being right. It is about being in relationship. So, we met here at St. Paul’s in small groups, we shared our stories, our challenges, our fears, our desires and we wondered together that if we choose love, if we trust God, then ultimately might the truth become known?

These are the discussions we have at St. Paul’s to grow in our faith and to discern how to live our faith. “You are God’s field.” Amidst the instability of our world, we don’t need to fear because we can love and create and reason. We can invite people in, so desiring for others a place where they experience God’s love and share God’s love, where they can grow in faith and
be inspired to live out their faith. We invite people in with radical welcome because we know
that it is only through our differences that we know life most completely. Together, we listen
with God’s love and so know how to enact God’s justice and righteousness. Together, we trust
in God’s love and so live in peace. Amen.