September 10, 2023. **REMEMBER, RESTORE, RENEW**

Once in a lifetime something happens on the world stage, which shapes the course of human events. One such event occurred on the morning of September 11, 2001. Though this event happened 22years ago it is still so vivid in our minds like it happened yesterday. Consider for a moment what was set in motion by the terrorist attacks of that day: Our nation’s capital was attacked. Over 3000 people lost their lives. The Manhattan skyline was irrevocably changed. The financial trade center for 150 nations was completely destroyed. The world’s economy was greatly tested.

We waged a war against the Taliban in Afghanistan. A long-standing war will be fought for years to come around the world. That’s the big picture and it says nothing of the tens of thousands of people here and abroad whose lives were changed. If we try to calculate the human toll emotionally and spiritually and we cannot. Only God can weigh such matters. But we try in feeble ways to understand.

The Gospel passage for this Sunday St. Matthew 18:15-20, is one of the most important promises that Jesus gives us, and it is also one of our favorite statements. Jesus says in verse 20, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." We love to remember that promise as we come together for our worship. But notice the context - Jesus says he will be with us in our worship, our church fights, our misunderstandings, and our pride.

The message for us this morning is that when such crises arise, I AM THERE, says the Lord, and I am watching...Remember that, and see that we act like Christians. But we try in futile ways to understand. Man-made events like these raise fundamental questions. Why is there so much evil in the world? Why do innocent people suffer? I even saw an article in the local weekly titled: Where was God on September 11, 2001?

Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." We love to remember that promise as we come together for our worship. When I first met you all during an informal gathering, we prayed together and I asked that you pray for me EVERY DAY, and I promised I would do the same. On my first anniversary and on my second anniversary I asked you to pray for me EVERY DAY, and I promised I would do the same. Because Jesus said ask and it shall be given unto you. For me prayer has played a vital role in my life.

To be honest, the job of parish ministry is getting harder. The word from ministers all over including me is, "No matter what I do, I know that it is never enough." "I want to please everyone, but I don't." "I want to meet everyone's expectations, no matter how impossible, and I can't." On top of that I want to meet the needs of my family. I NEED YOUR PRAYERS. I will not survive without them. Will you pray for me every day? My two years of ministry and continuing to minister to you is deeply rooted and depends on your prayers and my prayers.

There are limitless possibilities in our time together. What will that future hold? I do not know. But I know WHO holds the future. And I am content with that. I NEED YOUR PRAYERS for me to survive in this ministry. Will you pray for me every day? The reason I need your prayers is that Jesus said, "If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." That is a stunning endorsement for corporate prayer. It is important that we pray, but it is even more important that we pray together. We are a community. Better yet, we are a family. This saying of Jesus is part of a larger passage that emphasizes the importance of love among believers

We are not simply an assembly of individuals. We are the body of Christ. Our unity is essential to the mission to which Jesus has called us. Pray together is the message of our gospel passage this morning. Our theme for this Sunday is Remember, Restore, Renew. These three words are possible if you agree to pray for one another or pray together. If you would like to know more about the gospel of Jesus Christ, please join us in our worship on Sunday at 11:00 AM.

Peace!

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ponnuraj
Minister

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