

“God Shows No Partiality”

Acts 10:34-38

It was cold outside. It was so cold that when I stopped my '65 Chevy pick-up at stop lights, in Fargo, N.D., I had to grab my scraper and scrape the frost off the inside of my windows. I was on my way to St. Luke's Hospital and into the parking ramp. The walk between the ramp and the front doors seemed longer because of the cold.

I had two people I wanted to visit with – one very young woman and one very old woman. I knew I would need more time and energy for the visit with the older woman, so I went to the Birth Center first. The baby I was looking for was not behind the glass. He must be in with his mom.

I knocked on the door and was invited in. Mom was sitting up in her bed holding her newborn son. She smiled as I congratulated her. Her son was big and healthy as he sucked on one of his first bottles. She asked me if I wanted to hold him.

As I sat in the chair, holding this little miracle in my hands that looked back at me with shiny, dark eyes; I wondered what his future would hold. His mother unmarried, unemployed, and not yet through high school. His father in and out of trouble, unemployed, and not yet through high school.

And yet this miracle of birth that I now carefully handed back to mom. Her and I held hands and prayed. In that prayer I thanked God for the miracle of birth, for a blessing, for a

God that shows no partiality in who he blesses and when he blesses, for a God that sent his son through the womb of a young, unmarried teenager named Mary.

Then I went up the stairs to visit with a grandmother back in the hospital yet again as cancer slowly eats away at her body. She knows her pastor well – too well. Our visits had been many over the past five years.

We shake hands and share our familiar greetings. I take my usual seat beside her bed and set my little, black box on the table beside her. We talk of family and holidays, of medications and pain. We talk of death sometimes directly, most times indirectly. And I ask again, “Would you like to celebrate Holy Communion today?” “Of course.”

The black box is opened, the wine poured, the Word spoken, the Lord’s Prayer repeated and communion happens. The bread and wine are swallowed and I hold her hand and pray. In that prayer I thanked God for the miracle of the bread and wine, for a blessing, for a God that shows no partiality in who he blesses and when he blesses, for a God that sent his son through the womb, of a young, unmarried teenager named Mary, who grew into a man who showed no partiality in who he served, who showed no partiality in who he healed, who showed no partiality in dying on a cross to save anyone who would believe in his name.

God shows no partiality.

Again, the second lesson for this First Sunday after the Epiphany is Acts 10:34-38 . . .

³⁴Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶You know

the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ — he is Lord of all. ³⁷*That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced:* ³⁸*how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.*

May we show no partiality in our love for and in our service to all of God's children, and especially our love for and service to God's newest child, Joshua, who is baptized this morning.

As baptized children of God called to love and serve, let us together make our annual ministry selections for the coming year . . . and then bring them forward during the offering.

#574 – Here I Am Lord