

**“The Intelligence of God in Us”**

**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

**Freedom Celebration**

**July 5, 2020**

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**Iao United Church of Christ**

**Romans 7:15-25**

**Matthew 11:15-19, 25-30**

Prayer: Creator God, a God who surrounds us with infinite love, today we ask as many are feeling so alone, that you surround them with this love of yours. We could never have imagined having to be isolated from our communities, from our families, from our churches – and many are afraid Creator God. We need your tender touch to remind us that you are present, we need your love to remind us that you care for us – help us to rely on one another when we are in need of conversation and in need of human kindness. We pray for each other now and forever. Amen.

According to the online dictionary on Microsoft word, intelligence is defined as – the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills. Beginning from birth, we begin to acquire knowledge and skills, and then learn how to apply them in our daily living. But first, we learn what skills we are given by our creator, which skills really make us who we are from the inside. This is the discernment process as we grow older – the internal gift given to us that lights us up. Then we need to learn how to apply these skills – those internal gifts become alive inside of us and can be seen by those around us. Many of us head off to college to acquire more knowledge on how other have used similar gifts that match our own. WE spend years acquiring this knowledge. We get so caught up on applying that knowledge and skill in our daily work – week after week, year after year to a point where we think that is all there is to learn. That we have reached the end of all God has to teach us or to show us – here’s were we get stuck on traditions, doctrine, on “we’ve never done it that way before” type of attitude. We get so caught up on the routineness of life that we forget about the life-giver – that our Creator has more to

show us if we but sit and listen. That the Creator puts people on our path to show us more things, if we but sit and listen to them. We isolate ourselves in the corner and never venture out onto the dance floor – thinking we know all there is to know about anything – that we refuse to learn a new dance.

The synonyms for intelligence are – intellectual/mental capacity, intellect, mind, brain. Growing up I always heard this phrase, and this might sound familiar to many of you: “book smart.” My Mama always encouraged us to study hard, get good grades, focus on school, stay out of trouble. My Daddy always took me out and taught me how to do things with my hands, how to build fences, how to measure things by site, the difference between a fence gate and a house door, and most importantly how to treat people and how to be treated – many of us might think of this as “street smart.” I did my best in school and I also learned how to be street smart. But it did not take long for me to realize that learning and living in my small home village in New Mexico was totally different than urban living. The skill sets I had acquired living in my home village had to be changed and adapted to city living. I was no longer part of the majority of the population, I was looked upon as the minority in the grand scheme of things.

One thing for sure, growing up in rural New Mexico sure taught me about the value of community, about love of neighbor, about caring for the least of God’s people. A recent fire near my home village reminded me of this – the firefighters from the surrounding area joined in to fight the fire and keep it away from the village. This in turn brought the best hospitality that I have always known in the people of this small village in Northeaster New Mexico – that tradition continues even today. Even with all this skill set from my village, I was not prepared to see the enormity and the effects of houseless people in large cities. I was not prepared for the “it is all about me” type of attitude. I had not yet acquired the new skill sets necessary for urbanized living. You see beloved community I could not see where these words were a reality “but other hearts in other lands are beating with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.”

Through it all, growing, acquiring the skills necessary – my true champion, always present, always near to me was my faith and my trust that God would guide me somehow.

Beloved community, we get so caught up in our careers, get so caught up living our own lives in the corner, that we tend to forget about the lives of our neighbors. We forget about what it means to be compassionate people of God. The church has at times isolated itself thinking it has reached its fullest potential that it gets stuck, isolates itself in the corner and forgets that there is a big dance floor – forgets the Christ living on the streets of society.

W.E. Sangster once told about being invited to a party held to celebrate a wedding. He arrived late and knew nobody there except the friend who invited him. He subsequently played the role of a mere spectator to the evening's festivities.

Everyone, he noted, seemed to be in high spirits. They danced and shouted and sang and laughed and played games and indulged in all sorts of entertainment. They flung streamers across the hall, pranced around in paper caps, had much to eat and drink and generally seemed to have a great time.

As the evening progressed, however, Sangster noticed a young lady sitting in a corner alone. She seemed very happy, and smiled very pleasantly when he caught her eye, but she seemed a bit neglected. No one seemed to be paying her any attention. Sangster whispered to his friend, "Who's the young lady in the corner?"

His friend replied, somewhat startled, "Don't you know? I must introduce you. That is the bride."

That bride is the church beloved community. Either it has isolated itself in the corner to a point where fear and despair took hold or it had forgotten what its mission was – in essence, it has forgotten how to dance. Or when society celebrates Christmas but has left Christ out in the stable. Or when society celebrates Easter, but the resurrected Christ has been left out in the tomb. We forget who's we are and for who's benefit we are given skills and knowledge. When we get so caught up on honing on our acquired knowledge and skills – we forget that there's still a dance floor where Christ wants us to acquire new skills and new knowledge.

Let us close with this. Something about synonyms – they all have their opposite. Let us recall our words of intellectual/mental capacity, intellect, mind, brain – all these words have one antonym, antonym is the opposite or the counter words of synonyms. The one word opposite to all these beautiful and perfect words is – stupidity. “At that time Jesus said, ‘I thank you Creator, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants.’” See beloved community, Jesus was kind of poking fun of all the scholars and scribes and the learned people in the synagogues and temples – while elevating the common folks on the streets, the common folks out on the dance floor. You see beloved community, all these people were getting it! “For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they (they the book smart people) they say, ‘He has a demon;’ the son of God came eating and drinking, and they (the book smart people) they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’” “Friend of tax collectors and sinners” is code word for “I’m up here and the rest of you are down there.” “I’m upper class and the rest of you are – well, street rats.” This can be an example where the church has isolated itself into the corner and has forgotten its role, forgotten its call, forgotten how to dance. What good is having a church full of intellectual people, full of book smart people, full of talented and gifted people, if then it lacks compassion, if we forget our call from the cross.

Beloved community let us hold on to our faith. Let us be thankful for our gifts, our talents and each other’s gifts and talents. Let us remember that we are a world community, not an isolated one here in North America or the Pacific. Let us remember that Jesus was a dark-haired, dark colored skin Jew who was crucified for dancing with tax collectors and sinners. Let us remember whose we are, and who we are called to serve with our intellectual talents and gifts.

**Amen, Amene, Ashe, A-ho, and Alleluia.**