Hi,

Here’s today’s updates:

* **My Sunday class is moving to 11am beginning this Sunday, May 31,** to return to our usual church schedule.
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://scottengle.org/scotts-weekly-classes/). All the postings are up-to-date.

We can only meet on-line right now, but we are still the people of St. Andrew, this very special corner in the body of Christ. What are our responsibilities? Are we to be messengers of the church?

**Romans 10:14-15 (NRSV)**

**But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”**

**2 Corinthians 8:16-23 (NRSV)**

**But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have. For he not only accepted our appeal, but since he is more eager than ever, he is going to you of his own accord. With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming the good news; and not only that, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our goodwill. We intend that no one should blame us about this generous gift that we are administering, for we intend to do what is right not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of others. And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found eager in many matters, but who is now more eager than ever because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker in your service; as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.**

I’ve mentioned before that I’m drawn to Paul’s letters. I think, in large part, this is because Paul is doing the hard work of building up Christian communities. He is encouraging, instructing, and even rebuking these young communities as he goes about the work of the kingdom – inviting people in, welcoming them, challenging them to be true disciples of Christ and summoning them to their own work for the kingdom. Today’s passages give us a peek inside Paul’s exhortations to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and to be eager messengers of the church in all that they do.

*The Good News*

It is worth reviewing what we mean by the Good News, or more precisely, what Paul means. The Good News (*evangelion* in the Greek, also translated “gospel”) is *not* a summary of Jesus’ teachings nor a synopsis of his life and not even the comfort of knowing that Jesus loves us. Granted, all of that is good and much of it is news to many of us, but it is not what Paul nor the other NT writers mean by “Good News.” The Good News is a proclamation to the entire world that Jesus is Lord. It is no more complicated than that and no less profound. It is a public proclamation of something we claim is true. This world, indeed all of creation, has one Master and that person is Jesus. It is to him and him alone that every knee should bow (see Philippians 2:6-11). This is the Good News that transcends all other news because unless it is so, the world and all its inhabitants are adrift in a cosmos that is still lost. Richard Burridge writes, “Paul says remarkably little about Jesus’ ministry, and rarely quotes his teaching. Instead, he see the whole nexus of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection as a totality. In the ‘Christ Event’ God has acted to save men and women – and the whole cosmos. It is the central pivot of the ages.”

But how is this Good News to be believed, to be trusted? In a series of four rhetorical questions, the ever-practical Paul urges the Christians in Rome to understand that for the Good News to be trusted and embraced by people, it must first be proclaimed to them, and it can only be proclaimed if there are those willing to go out and do the proclaiming. But who is to do this proclaiming?

*The messengers*

The words can get a bit tricky here. In 2 Corinthians 8:23, Paul describes Titus and the unnamed “famous” brother as *apostolos*, which the NRSV kindly translates here as “messengers.” We often mistakenly assume that when the New Testament writers refer to apostles they mean only the twelve plus Paul. But, in truth, the NT uses a wide range of meaning for “apostle,” which is simply the Greek word for “messenger,” or more fully, “one who is sent with full authority.” For example, Paul refers to himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, specially commissioned by the risen Lord just as were the original twelve. And he clearly sees this as differentiating himself from other Christians. But he also lists Junia, almost certainly a woman, as “prominent among the apostles” (Romans 16:7) and lists “apostles” as among the gifts given to the church (Ephesians 4:11).

Christians have disagreed about exactly what to make of the varying distinctions among *apostolos* in the NT. Roman Catholics and Pentecostals have arrived at very different conclusions and, as you might guess, we Methodists are somewhere in the middle. Yet, all Christians find unity in Christ’s call for us to be the light to the world, to go and make disciples, to be messengers of the Good News. We may be given different gifts of proclamation, some of us may be better at deeds than at words, but we are all sent.

*The glory of Christ*

Paul writes that these messengers of the churches are the “glory of Christ.” Glory is the image of God, the divine transcendence, made visible to others, to the world. It is a social term. It is about seeing God. Thus, Jesus is the glory of God, for he makes God visible – see Jesus, see God. The cross is the glory of God, for it makes God’s redeeming love visible. Titus and the unnamed brothers are Christ’s glory because others can see God at work in them and through them. Their dedication and devotion to their God-given vocation glorifies Jesus Christ because it helps the world to see that Jesus is who they claim he is, namely, Lord and Savior of all.

We too are messengers of the church, called to invite others to the Lord’s table here at St. Andrew. We too are the glory of Christ, for our friends and neighbors can see God at work in us as we lovingly and enthusiastically invite them to join us at St. Andrew, even if it is to “virtual” church for the time being.

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott