

**Sermon preached at the Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia
on Sunday November 4th by the Reverend Alan Neale
“Making a Difference – Us!”**

The sermon today is the second of three sermons about discipleship and money; the second of three sermons in our 2008 Stewardship Campaign which has, as its theme, “Making a Difference”.

Yesterday I welcomed a Roman Catholic priest to this church to share with me in the celebration of a marriage. As I left him, for a while, with the groom I heard him ask Jonathan, “Are you ready?”... I never heard the answer so I asked Jonathan in the service, “Are you ready?”... and, thank God, he answered yes! So, the second of three sermons about stewardship... are you ready?

Last week, God can make a difference; this week, we will make a difference.

The collect, the special prayer, for today is the collect for All Saints’ Day and it contains two words which I rarely say in a prayer; in fact, one word I use all too rarely!

The first word is “knit”.... “Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship”.

Two people immediately came to my mind as I thought on the word “knit”... one is Madam Defarge from Dickens’ Tale of Two Cities. Madame Defarge who, during the French Revolution, went daily to watch the executions, laughing with horrid glee and dropping a stitch each time an aristocratic head fell beneath the guillotine.

The other “knitter” is Bishop Richard Rutt, who was Bishop of Leicester in England. His Lordship was a well-known knitter and wrote many bestsellers including “A History of Hand Knitting”. The Bishop learned the craft as a child from his uncle; took it up again in middle age to help cure depression and became so accomplished that he even knitted his own ecclesiastical vestments!

But the collect now presents us with a divine, eternal exponent of the knitting craft... God himself carefully choosing different colours,

different strands, different lengths, different textures and knitting together a most wondrous creation!

In this place, in this Church, in this Diocese, in this Episcopal Church, in this Anglican Communion God is working to “knit” together the elect... and come hell and highwater He will achieve His goal.

But the divine craftsman knits together not only across space but also across time and so today we celebrate a communion and fellowship not separated by time but woven together in the skilful and purposeful hands of God.

This is the communion and fellowship of which Daniel speaks and to which will be given the kingdom.

This is the communion and fellowship of which Paul speaks and to which is given an inheritance and riches.

This is the communion and fellowship into which babies Dominique and James will be baptized today... God, the divine knitter, weaving these two young souls into the great and spacious and eternal communion and fellowship.

At some point in our spiritual pilgrimage, in our discipleship, we accept that there is a responsibility to membership in this divinely, delicately and decisively woven fellowship and communion... the time comes when, for all its fault and foibles, we commit ourselves to the faith community, the church, to which we belong.

We hope and pray that in 2008 we will increase the number of people, households pledging, to 200.

We hope and pray that in 2008 we will break through the \$300,000 ceiling for pledges... expressions of financial support to this community and expressions of gratitude and obedience to the Lord.

Please will you be part of this... “we will make a difference”.

Oh, and I mentioned two words that seem special to me in today’s collect... one is “knit” and the other is “ineffable”.... what a wonderful word, it makes me smile, it makes me feel good, even to say the word “ineffable”. “

The path of discipleship is the path of giving for this is the very heartbeat of God (“for God so loved that He gave...”) and once on that path, once journeying on that path we will receive “ineffable joys”.

In the book of Nehemiah the people were give a task to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem – despite many attacks, many discouragements, many challenges the wall was rebuilt for “the people had a mind to work” and “they gave themselves for the common good”.

Let us as the people of God in this place have a mind to work and to give ourselves for the common good; let us be part of that wonderful creation that God is weaving together and let us be ready to receive and share with others “ineffable joys”.

AMEN

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