

Youth Sunday

Thaddeus Martin Senior Reflection

May 22, 2022

Good morning! Thank you all for being here this Sunday. After 18 years in the pews, it is somewhat surreal to be up in front of y'all and speaking. I ask that God can grant me the power to deliver my message with a fraction of the skill and subtlety of those who have preceded me in this pulpit. This church has been a blessing to me in many ways throughout my life, but perhaps the greatest gift it has given me is that of patience. Now that may sound odd and even a little passive aggressive; but hear me out, that's not how I mean it. In my life I have had many times where I have been waiting on God. Maybe I have asked him for something or have tried to understand why some terrible thing has happened; and I have seemed to find no answer. What I have learned through both the sermons I have heard here and through the deep-rooted traditions of this church is to be patient. God has a plan. There is a reason even if we can't comprehend it at the time. While we wait in blindness we must simply obey as best as we can and continue to worship God. We can see this in our first reading today in Acts 16. Lydia was a worshiper of God and was faithful to Him, but was evidently not baptized, and likely still had reservations about fully committing her life to God. If she had been impatient and ceased worshipping God because she never received a sign from him, then she likely would never have been exposed to the preaching of Paul in the first place. Her patience led her to the place where the Lord could soften her heart that she could fully accept him.

The people and traditions at this church taught me by example how to wait on God, how to be patient, and how to be faithful. Billy Tucker has been there three pews in front of the organ almost every single time I have come into this church. His devotion and faithfulness have shown

me the beauty of a generous life committed to God. Carolyn Stevens perpetually cleaning and setting up the altar has shown me how fulfilling it can be to serve others. Bill Bolton was a well of knowledge on the history of the church and the county in general and was always a delight to talk to, but he corrected me more times than I could ever count on the specific order in which I ought to light and put out the candles when serving as acolyte. At first, I didn't particularly appreciate this correction and thought that it was rather pointless. Over time I have come greatly appreciate the consistency and formality of the service at Grace as opposed to other churches. Its differentiation from those things around it and use of an ancient liturgy makes me feel closer to God whenever I participate in it. I find something special in knowing that I am praying the same prayer in the same church as those who lived centuries before me.

In addition to the wonderful congregation here, I have been blessed with phenomenal pastors and church leaders. Rhonda was always very kind to me when I was younger and generous throughout my many shortcomings during church services, from being the runaway lamb in the Christmas pageant to walking about five pews to far to hold the Gospel for her while I was acolyting. Emily walked me through the confirmation process with her children and has delivered several homilies that will stick with me. Friar John was also a wonderful inspiration in showing me how someone can live a full life and remain so deeply committed to God, and perhaps as importantly heavily influenced my sense of humor.

All of you here today and all those who are no longer with us at this church have been so impactful on me as a person by being great role models in so many ways. This church has taught me who God really is and how to wait on him. I hope it can do the same thing for many others after me.