

There Will be Test

Big Thoughts in a COVID-19 World

Rev. Kevin D. Kriesel, Blue Mound UMC

I've read of Editor and Columnist John Broux's concern about a growing coffee habit – up to a pot a day! I am also reminded of my growing up years. I grew up in Minnesota where the coffee flowed all day long. My folks had a pot of coffee on from the moment they woke up in the morning until they went to bed at night. It was consumed without any additives, it was not something to be wasted, and it was not for children.

How did they ever sleep, you may wonder? Well, I can't speak for my dad, they split when I was seven, but for Mom the answer was weak decaf coffee. I called it hot brown water when I grew up and developed a taste of my own. So, why all this coffee talk? Shouldn't we be exploring deep thoughts?

Fair enough, but the story brought this to mind. We've all grown up in different environments, in different families, with different norms. Over the years our life experiences have further shaped us, making us who we are today. Along the way, we've learned to get over the little things in life, even little things like no coffee or too much, weak coffee or strong. We've learned that such things are so trivial as to not be worth a fight – at least I hope so.

But what about the big things, things big enough I don't have to name them – the things that seem to be tearing us apart right now. A couple of scriptures come to mind, the first is Matthew 18:21-35, it's the one where Peter asks Jesus how many times one must forgive someone. Jesus says, in effect, never stop forgiving. (Although he does not say one must return to the previous state after forgiving – there's something to think about!)

The other is Paul's letter to the Romans – chapters 12-15 in general, 14:1-12 in particular. This section begins with Paul telling his readers to, "Welcome those who are weak in faith (folks who don't share your beliefs), but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions." It ends by saying, "Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God...each of us will be accountable to God."

So, if we are to forgive without ending, to love without end (a hold over from last week), and we are not to quarrel or judge, the answer to the big questions should be clear – we need to find a way to get along. Don't argue, don't judge, allow others to have their convictions, live for God. There will be a test. This is not to say that we ignore the issues, but rather that we get over our differences and work together to enact God's justice on earth.

Now there's a big thought! Let's define that concept, because justice goes far beyond human ideas of law and order. God's justice is established when everyone has what they need, whether we feel they deserve it or not, because "deserve" is a matter of judgment – which belongs to God alone. We all need food, water, clothing, shelter, safety, health care, love and other things. And until all have those things, then God's justice does not exist. God doesn't care about our political bickering! God expects us to be about God's business.

So if you have an issue that prevents you from working with others, then you should probably let it go and set your mind on more important things. Throw away the idolatry of your opinions and find a common point of belief. Belief in God, a God we all belong to, for the good of all. After all, there will be a test. We can do better America. Stay well, think big. Amen.

Pastor Kevin may be reached at kdsamk24@hotmail.com.