

The Second Sunday of Pentecost

May 25, 2008

Isaiah 49:8-16a

Psalm 131

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Matthew 6:24-34

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Forrestal Building is a large Federal office building on the Mall in Washington, D.C., a sterile gray concrete and glass creation of the sixties, standing in contrast to the exuberant red sandstone architecture of the Smithsonian Castle just across the street. Looking South from the building, you can see the Capitol; from the top floors of the Forrestal Building, there's a sweeping view of the Potomac. The building housed, some years ago, some of the offices of the Department of the Army.

There was I, a captain, fresh from some years in Europe and a graduate school assignment, walking the corridors of power on my first day ready to report to my new assignment. I was to report to Colonel Snyder.

As I reported to Colonel Snyder my eye was drawn to a framed picture on the wall over the colonel's desk. It was a picture of a dog with his paws over his head; the caption was, "Today is the First Day of the Rest of the Trouble." This did not instill confidence in the new guy.

I now know that it was obviously a paraphrase of this morning's Gospel from Matthew: "Tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today." I'm sure that's just what the colonel had in mind. The colonel embodied the antithesis of the other phrase, "Do not worry about tomorrow." He worried.

He was a big man, slightly balding; in memory I see him at his desk, head between his hands, much like the dog in the picture, staring morosely at some paperwork, obviously feeling himself the victim of cruel fate.

We know the colonel, don't we? Sometimes, we are the colonel, aren't we?

It's that two o'clock in the morning, or any time for that matter, playing of the "what if" tapes over and over in our minds. What if this happens; what if it doesn't? Why do we do that? We do it because we have the strange notion that we are in charge. We really feel that we can predict, and therefore control, the future. No, we can't. We don't do all that well controlling the present, much less the future.

Now I'm not saying that it's pointless to plan ahead; we need to do that, or we have perpetual chaos. The trouble arises when planning becomes so rigid that it produces fear and anxiety; then we have a problem. We have to leave room for faith.

"Faith is believing in things not seen." I believe Paul said that, and the future, tomorrow, is certainly something not seen.

Paul also said, "The Lord will bring to light things now hidden." The future, tomorrow, is hidden from us. Paul assures us that not only will Jesus be present with us tomorrow, and in all the days to come, but that He will open our hearts and minds to His presence. We will see His light.

Isaiah assures us that tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow the Lord will never forget us; He has given us comfort and will always give us comfort because He has compassion for us in our human plight.

It's been called "Blessed Assurance." It's real and it is ours. What better news for the future could there be?

In His Holy Name.