

Day 6 (Tuesday, October 20) “ For the Common Good” by Rev. Cordelia Burpee

Scripture Focus: “.. even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. As you know and as God is our witness we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others.”

Reflection: I have this *thing* about First Thessalonians.

In seminary I discovered that it is the oldest book in the New Testament, written a few decades after Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is clear that Paul holds a deep affection for the community in Thessalonica and is seeking to ease their distress and uncertainty. There is a personal presence and immediacy to his words as Paul is discovering how to do this new thing as the leader of a diverse and dispersed emerging church. He may not quite have the hang of it, but he is determined to guide support and reassure this community in any way he can. To me it feels real and honest.

We can identify with the community’s confusion as they sought to understand and support one another. They had many questions concerning their lives in that changing moment – who is included in God’s kingdom? What happens to those who came before us? How shall we live? What should we do now?

Pastors and church leaders can relate to Paul’s determination to *get it right*, to guide and support from a distance by the power of his words alone.

In this passage he reminds this community of who they know him to be. He invites them to judge his words by his actions and by his determination to avoid flattery, falsehoods and self-aggrandizement in following the path laid down for him.

Perhaps this is a useful reminder for us all, in this moment, to pick our words and consider the words of others by whether they would prove worthy of God’s notice. Does it need to be said? Is it helpful and kind? Do you think God would want you to say it? So .. maybe not *that* facebook post or tweet.. okay?

Prayer: Holy One, our teacher and guide, help us to seek to please you and you alone in all our thoughts, words and actions. It’s a tall order, we know (especially now) but with your guidance we just might get the hang of it. Thanks God – now and always. Amen.