



May 9, 2018

PREACHING, DISAGREEING, GROWING

There are two good things for which I give thanks whenever someone disagrees with a sermon that I have preached. Sure, there's a part of me that would be happiest if everyone agreed with everything I said (wouldn't we all?). But the bigger part of me is thankful for disagreements. Disagreements are a sign of a healthy and growing church.

I'm thankful for the *priesthood of all believers*. This is a theological phrase that traces back through the Protestant Reformation and all the way to the New Testament. In our church, we believe that every person has an important voice, and that we will hear God's Spirit speaking most clearly when everyone's voice is heard. This means that clergy are not the only ones with a holy calling. A church that ceded all thinking to the clergy is not a healthy and growing church. A church with disagreements is a sign of the priesthood of all believers.

I'm also thankful for the chance to grow. One of the great things about the Sunday ritual of praying into our confession and God's reconciliation is that it frees us from the unrealistic idea that we never make mistakes. In the years of my preaching, I have said things that I have later learned were not true, or were not the whole truth. Good members of my churches, disagreeing with honesty and care, have helped me to grow.

Sometimes there has been a disconnect between what I intended to communicate and what others have heard, and further discussion has allowed us to discover that we affirm the same faith and values.

The sermon is one part of a church's holy conversation. The next part of the conversation begins at the church door, or by phone, or over tea. It might begin when someone says, "Your sermon made me think of this..." And it might begin when someone says "I disagreed." I welcome those conversations. They are a sign of a healthy and growing church, where God's Spirit is at work.

I'll see you in church.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster
Senior Minister