

Easter 5C  
Readings: Acts 11:1-18

The Rev. Dr. Darcy Williams @ Emmanuel Chestertown  
Psalm 148

Rev 21:1-6

15 May 2022  
John 13:31-35

In our first lesson today, through a vision and a visit to Cornelius the centurion, Peter learns that the Good News Jesus brought into the world, the message of walking the way of love, with compassion, welcome, and understanding is not just a message for the Jews, but for all people.

In the Epistle, the Revelation to John, we hear the declaration that “*home of God is among mortals*” and that “*God is making all things new.*”

Finally in the Gospel, Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment: just as he loves them, they should love one another.

Last Thursday, the Vestry hosted a newcomers’ dinner. Members of the Vestry and their spouses and partners, along with committee chairs, gathered with about 30 newcomers and inquirers interested in learning more about Emmanuel, to share a meal, to get to know each other a little better and to tell part of the story of this community of faith. It was a time of welcome, fellowship and joy where the kind of love Jesus talks could be felt throughout the room.

Yesterday, members of the James Taylor Justice Coalition of Sumner Hall, representatives of the Chestertown government, the president of the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project, the chair of the Maryland Truth and Reconciliation Commission, local clergy, and members of the Kent County community at large joined together in our Parish Hall to celebrate Justice Day 2022, and to collect soil into 4 jars from the site across the street where James Taylor was lynched on May 17, 1892 by a mob of 60 masked and armed individuals while an estimated crowd of 500 stood by and watched.

What happened in 1892 was a tragic display of prejudice, oppression, and abuse of power. What happened yesterday was another step in the long road to justice and reconciliation guided by love and an honest desire to speak the truth with integrity.

Yesterday, several of us from Emmanuel stood with more than 100 other people -- people of all ages, blacks and whites together, as we gathered in our parish hall to honor the memory of James Taylor and to pledge ourselves to work for justice, equality, and freedom for all people regardless of the color of their skin. It was a time when this community demonstrated the kind of Love Jesus talked about when he told his disciples “I give you a new commandment that you love one another.” It demonstrated that this message was for all people, and that God is making all things new through us and our efforts to speak the truth with love and compassion.

Franciscan theologian Richard Rohr tells us:

"Love is not really an action that you do. *Love is what and who you are, in your deepest essence.* Love is a place that already exists inside of you, but is also greater than you. That’s the paradox. It’s within you and yet beyond you. . . the deep peace of the True Self. . . a well that will never go dry, . . . God’s Love in you, [that] cannot be exhausted.”

It is the kind of love that we work for, as we live Jesus' Way of Love that teaches us what is right, what is true, what is good and what is just. It is the Way of life Jesus taught, Peter preached and John saw in his vision.

But for the next few minutes, instead of listening to my words, I want to share part of a favorite book on mine that through illustrations and simple dialogue teaches about life and love far better than I. The book is "**The Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse**" by Charlie Mackesy.<sup>1</sup>

It begins with a small boy who is lonely when a mole suddenly appears. They say hello and the then the mole says "I'm so small." "Yes", answers the boy, "but you make a huge difference."

Then the mole asks "What do you want to be when you grow up?" "Kind" said the boy.

"What do you think success is?" asked the boy. "To love" said the mole.

After a conversation about the virtues of cake – which the mole believes is the answer to most questions, the mole talks about fear, "Most of the old moles I know wish they had listened less to their fears and more to their dreams."

As the boy and the mole look out over the vastness of nature in front of them the boy asks, "What is that over there?" "It's the wild" said the mole "Don't fear it" "Imagine how we would be if we were less afraid."

On the next page, the boy and the mole are sitting on a limb in a tree and a fox comes along, but gets caught in a snare. As the boy and mole approach the fox, he stares at the mole and angrily threatens him, but the mole reminds him what will happen to the fox if he stays caught in the snare, and with that the mole chewed through the wire with his tiny teeth.

Then the mole tells the boy, "One of our greatest freedoms is how we react to things." Time passes. Their journey continues.

[I read several other quotes from the book to the congregation today, but they are not printed here due to copyright concerns]

I will leave the rest of the book for you to read. It's a book about life: adventure, trust, beauty, kindness, and love. It is a book that reminds us we still have a long way to go, but let's us remember how far we have come.

Amen

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<sup>i</sup> Mackesy, Charlie, *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox, and the Horse*, Harper One, HarperCollins Books, 2019