

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
(Transferred) Feast of St. Francis of Assisi
Mr. William Gawors
June 22, 2014

It is a beautiful day; even if it were raining out, because we will be here at 10 am, along with our pets, for our Blessings with them. This is the first day of "Bring your dog to Work Week, and Mother Betsy, Mother Barbara, and I decided that today would be a good day to hold the Pet Blessing Service. The Blessing of Cole today is the Blessing of my rescue of him almost 3 years ago come this October. And the Gospel speaks of God's Blessing of the least of God's children, which most rescue dogs are, also.

I would like to talk a little bit about this morning's Gospel; Matthew 11:25-30, it really caught my attention and I became interested as I listened to the words in Jesus's prayer to his Father. I started thinking after hearing the first passage when Jesus was thanking his Father because he had hidden these things from the wise and intelligent peoples and had revealed them to the infants. Now if we think about that sentence, the infants could be all of God's children, and the more I thought about this the more I realized that all of God's children include the ones who have no knowledge, are poor, are oppressed, and distraught.

I had a vision and in this vision I saw God in downtown Shippensburg. He appeared to be moving rather quickly but did stop to visit the wise and intelligent people of this community, before he moved towards the direction of Roxbury Ridge Apartments where I live to give his things to the poor and oppressed, and distraught so that they might become more knowledgeable and intelligent to be able to live and survive.

Another passage in this Gospel that caught my attention states: 'All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' Now if we think about this passage for just a minute, it tells us that "whom the Son chooses to reveal him," that these are the poor, oppressed, and distraught people of Shippensburg, Pa.

The last passage of the Gospel has one sentence in it; and I clearly remembered that some 30 odd years ago this passage went like this: "Come to me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will refresh

you” And in today’s Gospel it is a different version, but with the same meaning. I was an Acolyte when I was saying that passage, and I was amazed that I had remembered it to this day. What this passage tells us is that God is showing his loving kindness and removing the heavy burdens from the poor and distraught and then giving them rest.

Since today is our Pet Blessing Service; I wanted to take a few moments to reflect on my dog Cole. He came to me, thanks to my neighbor Nan Watson who lives across from me, whose mother lives in Georgia. She fosters rescued dogs and cats and find good homes for them when they are ready to go to a new home. So Nan and her boyfriend drove down to Bristol, Tenn and met her mother halfway and picked up Cole and brought him to me the following day.

When Nan had asked me if I wanted a dog, I did not hesitate in the least, because something had told me to accept the gift of the dog, and I am glad I did. June 6, 2014 marks Cole’s eighth birthday, and this October marks Cole’s 3rd anniversary with me here in Shippensburg. His former owner just threw him in the backyard, gave him no love or attention, and let the 6 larger dogs act as bullies towards him. Cole never had any toys, so he did not know what it meant to play, now he has more toys than he knows what to do with. And more love that he ever had back in Georgia with his former owner.

The relationship between the Gospel and my dog Cole comes from the passage; “Come to me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you”

Because this is what I have done with Cole. I took him in and took away his heavy burdens, and I refreshed his life, and gave him love and kindness. So this means that we as people should remember that God shows us his love and kindness, and that we in turn should show our love and kindness to others in the community and today especially to our pets.

Finally, please remember that there are wounded and abused animals at the local shelter’s waiting for someone to provide them with a good home and loving care and kindness.

So as we pray today for these animals during the Pet Blessing Service, please keep in mind that there are still thousands of unwanted animals that need a good home and love and care. Amen.