February 6
Greetings, DGCC Family.

Last Thursday I spent about 45 minutes at the baggage claim area of O'Hare Airport as I was waiting for our son, who had flown in for my wife Judy’s birthday. Airports are a great place for “people watching.” While I had brought a book with me to pass the time, I couldn’t help but notice all the people in all their diversity that were walking past me.

Orthodox Jews with their black suits and long locks. Muslim women wearing their hajib. Black, brown, and white people. Short, tall, male, female, young, old, and everything in between. Languages from around the world. Some in a hurry and some just waiting, like me. All manner of dress. Ubiquitous were rolling suitcases and mobile phones.

With all that diversity, there was at least one thing in common: when those who were travelling met the loved ones who were waiting for them, universally there was joy and happiness. Smiles, hugs, and a few tears. One mother would not let go of her son, who was in a military uniform. A little girl leapt into her father’s arms. And a young man with a single rose greeted a woman with a passionate kiss. A father could not hold back tears while reconnecting with his adult daughter and said to her, “I’m so glad you’re home.” All of these “homecoming” scenes played out before me and were equally beautiful and touching.

As I sat there, it made me think of our ultimate “homecoming” as followers of Christ, when our travel on this earth is done, and we take the trip to our eternal home. Jesus Himself said that He has personally prepared a room for us in the Father’s house:

“In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

Think of it. When our earthly journey is over and we finally go home, we go to a room in God’s own house. A room that Jesus has personally, and carefully prepared for us. A room marked with our name from, and through, eternity. A room where even now, Jesus waits to greet us with an embrace, and with the words, “I’m so glad you’re home.”

IHS,
Pastor Lou
February 7

Grace and peace to you this day.

As I continue from yesterday on my observations of the diversity of the human race that I observed in the baggage claim area of O'Hare, it makes me wonder about God’s purpose in all of this. What are we to learn in the great amount of variety that takes place in humankind?

To begin with, I am mindful of the words of the Psalmist:

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Psalm 139:13-14).

Here we learn that God creates us carefully as we develop in our mother’s womb, including our “inmost being.” What’s more, we learn that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.”

What to make of this? To start with, I think that God intends for His created humankind to be “fearfully and wonderfully” diverse. And if that is so, and I think it is, I also think that we are to embrace the diversity found in the human race. I say that not as a statement of political correctness, but as a statement of spiritual celebration. Much as Paul advises that all of us have different spiritual gifts, so does this passage advise that we all have different physical and emotional characteristics.

All of that being said, while embracing the diverse nature of humanity that God intends, we nonetheless come together as one; a single people, when we approach the cross. The apostle Paul said it like this:

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

All are equal at the foot of the cross. Your skin color, your income bracket, your age, the language you speak; none of it matters to the One who went before you. I think the daughter of a former colleague of mine, a young Black woman, perhaps said it best to me a number of years ago: “Heaven will be the most diverse place you’ve ever seen.” To that I say, Amen.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
February 8

Grace and peace to you.

One of my favorite passages in Scripture is from the book of Revelation. Admittedly, Revelation can be a difficult book to read and a difficult book to understand. Scholars vary a fair amount on how to interpret it. It speaks of the end of times, when the reign of Christ becomes eternal and those who are His followers come together to worship Him in glory. John the Elder, the author of Revelation, describes it like this:

"After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’” (7:9-10).

What a marvelous passage this is. And what an awesome glimpse it gives us into what eternity will look like. So many people gathered that they could not be counted. From “every nation, tribe, people, and language.” Note here that John does not say “from a few nations,” or from “certain” nations. The word he uses for “every” can also mean “all.” People from all the nations. People from all the tribes. People representing all the languages. It is God’s intent that no race or no ethnic group be left out.

However, within this great diversity, all the peoples and all the tribes and all the nations gather wearing white robes and waving palm branches for a single purpose: to worship the Almighty. And not just sitting quietly in their pews softly singing a hymn or reciting prayer. There is nothing reserved about the nature of worship in heaven. The multitudes gather in all of their diversity and cry out loudly with a single voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

Perhaps this Sunday, as we gather for our worship service, we can look around and see how differently God has made each one of us. And then while celebrating our differences, we can come together as a single voice and proclaim together, “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

IHS,

Pastor Lou
Greetings, DGCC Family.

As we conclude our brief walk through the diversity of God’s created humanity, I come to the letter the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colossae. The book we know as Colossians.

Paul was writing to the young church there for several reasons, including explaining who Jesus was as well as what He was. Remember that in the early days of the church, there was much debate, and more than a little confusion, about who and what Jesus was. Was He God? Was He the Son of God? Was He a Man? Was He a prophet? Was He God and Man? Was He present at Creation? Did God the Father create His Son? And so on. Paul answers these questions with this:

“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:16-17).

Here Paul is saying that Jesus is the agent of all Creation; that is, all of Creation, including humankind, was created by Him, through Him, and because of Him. Everything on heaven and on earth. Everything that is visible and invisible. Moreover, because God is purposeful in all of His sovereignty, that means, in turn, that all of Creation was created for a purpose and with a purpose.

And that brings us full circle to the human race with all of its diversity. God created the human race with all of its diversity for a purpose, and that purpose is to honor Him and glorify His name. The Lord says this through the prophet Isaiah:

“Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them” (Isaiah 43:7).

And there you have it. Whatever we may look like, wherever we may live, wherever this earthly life may take us, however diverse we may be, the purpose of each and every one of us is not diverse but singular: to glorify the One who created us.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
February 10

Happy Friday, everyone!
Here's your musical devotional for the week. Turn up the volume and enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4exKwB0WRk

IHS,
Pastor Lou