

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time - A - 2020
Jeremiah 20.10-13///Romans 5.12-15///Matthew 10.26-33

→so this weekend are two special days for me (Saturday 33rd anniversary of ordination....Sunday is my 60th birthday)...so I would like to start with a little story about what it means to reach this milestone in life.

→no doubt one of the byproducts of this pandemic has been the long lines for almost everything and anything that have become a part of life these days....

→so I read in the newspaper a few weeks ago about a woman who was in line at the McDonalds drive through....

→she pulled up to give her order through the speaker...and as she was doing so....the person in the car behind her...leaned on her horn...supposedly because the lady in the first car was taking too long to place her order....

→rather than getting upset...the first lady decided to take the “high road”...so when she got to the first window...she paid not only for her order but also for the order of horn blower behind her.

→as the second car got to the cashier, they must have told her what the first lady had done because now she just “tooted” her horn, leaned out the window and waved mouthing the words.. “thank you.”...obviously embarrassed that her rudeness had been repaid with kindness.

→when the first car got to the pick-up window...she showed both receipts for both orders...took all the food as well and drove off.

→laughing as she looked back in the mirror because now the hornblower had to go back to end of the line and start all over.

→the moral being...don't honk your horn at old people!

→what that says to me is that this being my last day at 59...I can see myself being the hornblower...tomorrow at 60...I can see myself being and doing the exact same thing as the first lady.....

[what that says to me is that yesterday as a 59 year old...I can see myself being the hornblower...today now that I'm 60...I can see myself doing the exact same thing as the first lady...]

→”FEAR”...it's an interesting word...it is used to convey very different moods, emotions and cautions

→on the one hand, it communicates anxiety...high anxiety at times...and at other times it's about “excitement” at the anticipation of something good happening on the other side of some danger...like surviving your first ride on a rollercoaster!

PAUSE

→and “**fear**” is often associated with risk

→it can describe a state of mind, or an extended emotion lasting even for a life time...such as the fear of heights or subways; lightning and thunder; getting old or not getting old...

→these are sometimes called phobias....which is an excessive or exaggerated fear that under certain conditions and circumstances immobilizes people...

→[you know] **fear is easy to create...//...courage is tougher to acquire...**

→our culture today often benefits from feeding our fears...as a result...there is always plenty to go around:

→the fashion industry relentlessly tells us we're not wearing the right clothes.

→sellers of technology inform us we missing out on the latest or that we are already lagging behind on the newest.

→social media assures us we're not having as much the fun as others are having.

→and the entertainment machine tells us to make more money, take more cruises, watch more shows, eat and drink more food.

→[and] a deeper sense of fear...urges us to seek more protection from a threatening world, buy more guns, build more defenses and shut out people who are different.

PAUSE

→in a word...**fear**...tells us there's not enough good stuff for everybody...so, as a result, we have to choose sides /// identify enemies /// label the undeserving /// and stockpile our fair share.

→need I remind you...toilet paper, paper towels, sanitizing wipes, hamburger and coffee creamer.....

PAUSE

→the way **fear** is used...to....control...us is limitless...

→and "anxiety" is the real plague of our times....

→I am sure you will agree...there is a lot for us to be anxious about today.

→yet.... in the midst of all this...the words of Jesus today to his disciples and to us...are "**fear not**"...."**do not be afraid.**"

→he speaks these words as he was preparing to send his disciples out into the world to extend his ministry of truth and healing...[and] they were anxious about this new assignment...

→much like many of us are today as we continue to deal with all that is going on...

→like a student pilot taking their first solo flight without the presence and assurance of the flight instructor, the disciples were understandably nervous...

→Jesus knew this about them, and he knows this about us

“do not be afraid” he says...naming the demon of their emotions...the fear that threatened to paralyze their feet, mute their tongues, and stifle their witness.

→**“do not be afraid”**...how often is this the message of God given through his messengers.

→these were the words spoken by the angel to Gideon to coax him to lead the people Israel against the Midianites.

→“do not be afraid” is what God said to Jeremiah when he hesitated to accept the call to be a prophet...

→“do not be afraid” is what the angel said to Joseph as he pondered what to do with Mary, his betrothed when he found out she was with child...

→[and] “do not be afraid” was the message of the angels to the women who found the tomb empty after the resurrection...

→and it is these same words that God speaks to you and me this day in the midst of all that troubles us...be it a virus, racism, or even our own personal fears in life.

→[you know] in some respects...most of that which we fear is often overblown in our imagination...

→imaginary monsters hiding under the bed...strange sounds at night...being alone in the dark....

→that sometimes causes us to miss so much of life...

PAUSE

→that's not to say that there isn't anything to fear....

→on the contrary...there are many things in today's world that make us fearful: crime in the streets, the threat of terrorism, the loss of a job, anxiety connected with life changes...the fear of getting old...

→but let's not forget...there is also so much more in life to cherish...so much more in life to do...that will never happen if we remain consumed and overcome by fear.

PAUSE

→it was once asked... "what makes a person alive?" and the reply was "every hour in life is divided into a certain number of secondsand every second into a certain number of fractions...[and] anyone who is able to be **totally present** in each fraction of a second is alive."

→Jesus phrased that same thought by urging the anxious disciples ...and you and me.....to be present to the God's love and care...for each one of us...

→the person over whom fear has lost its grip...like the smallest sparrow and lilies of the field has no anxieties for tomorrow....for if we are truly favored by God...how much more are we in the center of his Divine care...

→so....sleep well tonight...and rise confident tomorrow...remembering God's care, love and presence in all of us...for with that.....we really have no need to fear anyone or anything else.