

October 21, 2018

PROPER 24 – YEAR B

Job 38:1-7; Psalm 104:1-9,25,37b; Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 10:35-45

SO HERE WE ARE – IN THIS TIME OF CHANGE AND TRANSITION – THIS TIME IN-BETWEEN RECTORS.

DON'T WE ALL KNOW WHAT IT IS TO LIVE IN-BETWEEN TIMES?

I KNOW I DO.

ONE OF THE MOST VIVID IN-BETWEEN TIMES FOR ME WAS THE TIME BETWEEN FINISHING MY BACHELOR'S DEGREE AND STARTING SEMINARY.

I HAD SPENT YEARS GOING TO COLLEGE PART-TIME TO FINISH MY DEGREE SO I COULD FINALLY FULFILL MY DREAM OF GOING TO SEMINARY AND BEING ORDAINED AS A PRIEST.

IT HAD BEEN HARD WORK GOING TO COLLEGE WHILE WORKING FULL-TIME, BUT NOW THE END WAS CLOSE.

I EXPECTED TO GRADUATE IN THE SPRING OF 1990 AND START SEMINARY THE NEXT FALL.

IN MY MIND THAT SUMMER WAS A LONG ENOUGH IN-BETWEEN-TIME.

BUT THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY, ALONG WITH THE BISHOP, SAW IT DIFFERENTLY.

THEY WANTED ME TO TAKE A YEAR OFF BEFORE STARTING SEMINARY.

TO ME THIS SEEMED LIKE A WASTE OF TIME AND AN UNNECESSARY DELAY.

I WAS NOT ONE BIT HAPPY ABOUT THIS TURN OF EVENTS.

IN FACT I WAS DOWNRIGHT ANGRY, BUT I HAD NO CHOICE.

AS IT TURNED OUT THIS IN-BETWEEN TIME WAS RICH WITH OPPORTUNITY AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

ONE OF THE MOST MEANINGFUL THINGS I DID DURING THAT TIME

“OFF” WAS TO TRAVEL WITH FRIENDS FROM CHRIST

CHURCH WAUKEGAN TO ETHETE, WYOMING IN THE

WIND RIVER INDIAN RESERVATION, HOME TO

SHOSONE AND ARAPAHO INDIANS.

WE WENT THERE ON A MISSION TRIP TO PROVIDE VACATION BIBLE

SCHOOL FOR THE CHILDREN, CLEAN AND REPAIR BUILDINGS AT THE

COMMUNITY CENTER WHICH INCLUDED THE LOCAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

AND FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS THAT CROSSED CULTURAL BOUNDARIES.

WE LEARNED ABOUT TRIBAL HISTORY AND CURRENT CHALLENGES AS WE

VISITED WITH ELDERS AND LISTENED TO THEIR YOUNG PEOPLE.

WE WERE FORTUNATE THAT OUR VISIT COINCIDED WITH THEIR

ANNUAL POW-WOW SO WE WERE PRIVILEGED TO EXPERIENCE AUTHENTIC

NATIVE AMERICAN DRUMMING, CHANTING, AND DANCING AS THEY

HONORED THEIR HERITAGE.

OUR CAMPGROUND WAS ACROSS THE ROAD FROM THE POW-

WOW WHICH WENT ON INTO THE NIGHT.

AS I DRIFTED OFF TO SLEEP, I COULD HEAR AND FEEL THE BEAT

OF THE DRUMS AND IT WAS AS IF IT WAS ALL AROUND ME

AND WITHIN ME CONNECTING WITH MY OWN HEART BEAT.

IT WAS LIKE LISTENING TO THE HEART BEAT OF GOD.

I LEARNED SO MUCH ABOUT MYSELF AND WHAT IT MEANS TO BE
IN MINISTRY THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT THIS
IN-BETWEEN TIME.

IT WAS NOT A TIME OF PASSIVE WAITING, BUT A FERTILE TIME OF
GROWING AND STRETCHING AND EXPLORING GOD'S WORLD.

WE HAVE ALL HAD IN-BETWEEN TIMES –
TIME BETWEEN JOBS, OR RELATIONSHIPS, OR GRADES IN
SCHOOL, OR DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENTS, OR YOU FILL IN THE BLANK ,
THOSE TIMES OF WAITING AND TRANSITION AS WE ANTICIPATE
WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT.

SOMETIMES WE WELCOME THEM AND SOMETIMES WE RAIL
AGAINST THEM, BUT ALWAYS THEY ARE OPPORTUNITIES
FOR GROWTH.

LIFE IN A PARISH IS NO DIFFERENT.

ONCE AGAIN WE ARE IN THE IN-BETWEEN TIME.

WE HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE, IN THIS PLACE OF TRANSITION
AND CHANGE, AND I CAN PROMISE YOU IT WON'T BE THE
LAST TIME.

IT IS JUST ONE OF THE MANY TRANSITIONS WE WILL FACE AS A
PARISH.

I AM REMINDED ONCE AGAIN OF A TRAPEZE ARTIST.

VISUALIZE THE TRAPEZE ARTIST SWINGING ALONG ON THE TRAPEZE.

GLIDING THROUGH THE AIR IS SMOOTH AND EASY AND FEELS SAFE AND SECURE, BUT SUDDENLY THERE IS ANOTHER TRAPEZE TO GRAB ON TO.

IT ISN'T THERE YET, BUT THE TRAPEZE ARTIST CAN SEE IT COMING.

BUT HERE IS THE CATCH.

IN ORDER TO GRAB ON TO THE NEW TRAPEZE, THE TRAPEZE ARTIST MUST LET GO OF THE OLD FAMILIAR TRAPEZE AND STRETCH TO REACH OUT TO GRAB THE NEW ONE.

THERE IS A MOMENT IN TIME WHEN THE TRAPEZE ARTIST HAS LET GO OF ONE TRAPEZE BAR AND NOT YET CAUGHT THE OTHER.

THAT'S IN-BETWEEN TIME.

AND THAT'S WHERE WE ARE AS A PARISH.

LIFE HAS BEEN GOOD WITH ELIZABETH.

WE WERE COMFORTABLE AND THINGS WERE MOVING ALONG SMOOTHLY.

WE ACCOMPLISHED SOME REALLY GOOD THINGS WHILE SHE WAS WITH US.

ELIZABETH BECAME PART OF THE FABRIC OF OUR LIFE TOGETHER SHARING IN OUR JOYS AND SORROWS.

SHE CREATED MEMORIES WITH US AND TAUGHT US MUCH ABOUT

GOD'S LOVE.

AND NOW WE ARE IN THAT IN-BETWEEN TIME.

WE HAVE GIVEN A PROPER FAREWELL TO ELIZABETH AND SENT HER OFF WITH GOD'S LOVE AND OUR PRAYERS.

NOW IT IS TIME FOR US TO BE PRESENT TO OUR FEELINGS OF GRIEF AND LOSS, FEELINGS OF UNCERTAINTY AND ANXIETY EVEN AS WE STRETCH AND REACH OUT TO THE NEW THINGS COMING OUR WAY.

JUST LIKE IT IS WITH THE TRAPEZE ARTIST THIS IS A TIME OF ANTICIPATION AND DELIBERATE, INTENTIONAL ACTIONS AND DECISIONS.

THIS IS AN ACTIVE, CREATIVE TIME – A TIME TO ASK ONCE AGAIN WHERE IS GOD LEADING US, WHAT IS GOD ASKING US TO DO, AND WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BE?

IT TAKES TIME TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS AND IT REQUIRES THAT WE WORK TOGETHER LISTENING DEEPLY TO ONE ANOTHER AND THE PROMPTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AMONG US AND WITHIN US.

SOME OF US – IN PARTICULAR OUR VESTRY, WARDENS, AND SEARCH COMMITTEE – WILL BE IN POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP.

SOME OF US WILL BE IN SUPPORTIVE ROLES, BUT WE EACH HAVE A PART TO PLAY IN A SHARED MINISTRY EXERCISED IN THE WAY OF SERVANTHOOD.

LIKE SO MANY OTHER TIMES, IN TODAY'S READINGS WE HEAR JESUS TALK ABOUT SERVANTHOOD, ABOUT SERVANT MINISTRY. HE HAS SET HIS FACE TOWARD JERUSALEM AND THE SUFFERING THAT AWAITS HIM THERE.

HE ASKS JAMES AND JOHN IF THEY ARE ABLE TO DRINK THE CUP THAT HE DRINKS.

THIS IS SIMILAR TO WHEN JESUS TEACHES THAT DISCIPLESHIP REQUIRES TAKING UP THE CROSS AND FOLLOWING HIM.

DRINKING THE CUP THAT JESUS DRINKS OR TAKING UP THE CROSS MEANT SUFFERING AND DEATH FOR HIM AND FOR MANY OF HIS DISCIPLES AND FOLLOWERS THROUGH THE CENTURIES, BUT IT DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN PHYSICAL DEATH.

IT ALSO MEANS DYING TO SELF AND THE HUMAN TENDENCY TO SEEK HONOR OR STATUS OR POWER.

JESUS TEACHES THAT THE HEIRS TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD ARE THE LOWLY NOT THE MIGHTY AND POWERFUL.

REAL PROMINENCE AND AUTHORITY REQUIRES THAT ONE BE A SERVANT.

BUT JESUS DOESN'T JUST TEACH US.

HE SHOWS US BY EXAMPLE HOW TO LIVE, AND ULTIMATELY SHOWS US BY GIVING UP HIS OWN LIFE FOR LOVE'S SAKE.

JESUS HAS TOLD US AND SHOWED US HOW TO LIVE TOGETHER AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

THE READING FROM HEBREWS SAYS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST.

BY VIRTUE OF OUR BAPTISM, WE ARE MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST, SHARING IN HIS PRIESTHOOD.

WE ARE CALLED BY GOD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WORK OF CHRIST AND SHARE CHRIST'S LOVE.

TOGETHER WE ARE EMPOWERED TO BE THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

TOGETHER WE ARE THE CHURCH.

TOGETHER WE WILL DISCERN THE WAY FORWARD.

IT WILL REQUIRE US TO LET GO OF THE OLD WAYS, THE "WAY WE'VE ALWAYS DONE IT," AND GRASP NEW IDEAS AND WAYS OF DOING THINGS AND BE OPEN TO POSSIBILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES.

THIS IS A TIME FOR US TO NURTURE AND ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER.

HENRI NOUWEN HAS SAID, "SPIRITUAL GREATNESS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH BEING GREATER THAN OTHERS.

IT HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH BEING AS GREAT AS EACH OF US CAN BE." (*Can You Drink This Cup?*)

IT WILL BE IMPORTANT FOR US TO CALL FORTH ONE ANOTHER'S GIFTS, INSIGHTS, AND ABILITIES.

WORKING TOGETHER, SERVING TOGETHER WE MAKE THIS PARISH AS GREAT AS IT CAN BE.

WE WON'T NECESSARILY ALWAYS AGREE, BUT AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD WE WILL RESPECT ONE ANOTHER'S POINT OF VIEW

AND CONTINUE TO CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER AND LOVE ONE ANOTHER
SEEKING THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE WELFARE OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN ALL
THAT WE DO.

NOT EVERYTHING WILL CHANGE. MANY THINGS WILL CONTINUE AS ALWAYS.
WE WILL CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER AND CARRY ONE
ANOTHER'S BURDENS AND FAILURES WITHOUT BEING SELF-RIGHTEOUS OR
JUDGEMENTAL.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO CELEBRATE ONE ANOTHER'S SUCCESSES
AND JOYS WITHOUT BEING JEALOUS OR RESENTFUL.

WE WILL CONTINUE WITH OUR OUTREACH EFFORTS TO FEED THE
HUNGRY AND ASSIST OUR VETERANS, AND PROVIDE FOR
THE NEEDS OF THOSE THAT ARE UNDERSERVED IN
THE LARGER COMMUNITY.

THE CROP WALK, THE SOCK HOP, PADS COOKING, THE GIVING TREE
WILL ALL HAPPEN.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO NURTURE THE FAITH OF OUR CHILDREN,
HELPING THEM TO GROW IN THEIR LOVE FOR CHRIST.

CHILDREN'S CHAPEL AND SUNDAY NIGHT LIVE WILL KEEP ON GOING.
THE WEDNESDAY MORNING STUDY GROUP WILL CONTINUE TO
EXPLORE THE LIFE OF FAITH.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO CONNECT WITH ONE ANOTHER IN
FELLOWSHIP AT COFFEE HOUR AND PARISH GATHERINGS.

THE BILLS WILL BE PAID AND OUR BUILDING AND GROUNDS WILL

CONTINUE TO BE MAINTAINED.

WE WILL KEEP ON WITH THE GOOD WORK THAT GOD HAS CALLED
US TO DO IN CHRIST'S NAME.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO GATHER FOR WORSHIP, SINGING AND
PRAYING AND CELEBRATING GOD'S LOVE FOR US AND ALL OF CREATION.

TODAY, LIKE EVERY SUNDAY, WE WILL BREAK THE BREAD AND FILL
THE CUP SO THAT WE CAN EAT AND DRINK THAT WHICH, IN
THE WORDS OF HENRI NOUWEN, TRANSFORMS US INTO THE "BODY OF
THE LIVING CHRIST, ALWAYS DYING AND ALWAYS RISING."

SO IN THIS IN-BETWEEN-TIME, LET US REMEMBER THAT WE ARE IN
THIS TOGETHER AND WE HAVE A SAFETY NET.

BISHOP PORTER TAYLOR REMINDS US THAT "EVERY MOMENT OF
EVERY DAY, GOD IS SAYING 'YES' TO US" EVEN BEFORE WE
SAY "YES" TO GOD. (*To Dream as God Dreams*)

GOD IN CHRIST HAS PROMISED TO LOVE US AND KEEP US AND BE
WITH US ALWAYS.

THAT WILL NOT CHANGE.

THANKS BE TO GOD!