

The Sunday Missive – January 22, 2023 The Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Hymn 533 How wondrous and great thy works

How wondrous and great thy works, God of praise!
How just, King of saints, and true are thy ways!
O who shall not fear thee, and honor thy Name?
Thou only art holy, thou only supreme.

To nations of earth thy light shall be shown;
their worship and vows shall come to thy throne:
thy truth and thy judgments shall spread all abroad,
till earth's every people confess thee their God.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_k26kaoz0I

The Collect of the Day

Give us grace, O Lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Isaiah 9:1-4

There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness-- on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of
Midian.

Psalm 27

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear*
***The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be
afraid?***

One thing have I asked of the Lord; one thing I seek* ***That I may
dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.***

To behold the fair beauty of the Lord* ***And to seek God in his
temple.***

For in the day of trouble he shall keep me safe in his shelter*
***He shall hide me in the secrecy of his dwelling and set me high
upon a rock.***

Even now he lifts up my head* ***Above my enemies round about
me.***

Therefore I will offer in his dwelling an oblation with sounds of
great gladness* ***I will sing and make music to the Lord.***

Hearken to my voice, O Lord, when I call* ***Have mercy on me and
answer me.***

You speak in my heart and say, "Seek my face."* ***Your face, Lord,
will I seek.***

Hide not your face from me* ***Nor turn away this your servant in
displeasure.***

You have been my helper; cast me not away* ***Do not forsake me,
O God of my salvation.***

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Hymn 758 You have come down to the lakeshore

You have come down to the lakeshore
Seeking neither the wise nor the wealthy,
But only asking for me to follow.

O Jesus, you have looked into my eyes,
Kindly smiling, you've called out my name.
On the sand I've abandoned my small boat;
Now with you, I will seek other seas.

You know full well my possessions;
Neither treasure nor weapons for conquest,
Just these my fishnets and will for working. (refrain)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IAZS3jtfwc>

Matthew 4:12-23

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.”

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Come Together -- Epiphany 3A

“The divine comes to life in individuals, and can be gloriously revealed in individual people; but it attains its earthly fullness only where, having awakened to an awareness of their universal being, individual beings open themselves to one another, disclose themselves to one another, help one another; where immediacy is established between one human being and another; where the sublime stronghold of the individual is unbolted and one person breaks free to meet another. Where this takes place, the Eternal arises in the Between. The seemingly empty space, that place of

actualization is community, and true community is that place where the Divine comes to its actualization among human beings.” (Martin Buber—*On Judaism*)

This making room for the holy phenomenon of relationship is our universal vocation. Sometimes we feel more excited about it than others. Sometimes we just want to head for the hills, or down an empty stretch of beach or highway for a while to be by ourselves. But the old adage, “Wherever you go, you’re still going to find you there” holds true for the devout as much as for the rest of us; we can’t run away from ourselves.

The Desert Mothers and Fathers were early Christians whose piety and hunger for spiritual clarity led them to spend their lives as hermits. Their movement, begun in response to the persecution of Christians by Roman authorities, eventually grew into what we now know as monasticism: Nuns and monks and other religious. One story illustrates that even in the desert there is no escaping our own habitual responses:

A brother was restless in his community and often moved to anger. So, he said: “I will go and live somewhere by myself. And when I must talk or listen to no one, I shall be tranquil, and all this painful anger will come to an end.” So, he went out and lived alone in a cave. One day he filled up his water jug at the well and put it on the ground. It happened to fall over. He filled it again, and again it fell. When it happened a third time, he flew into a rage, snatched up the jug – his only one -- and smashed it on the rocks. Regaining his composure, he saw that the demon of anger had mocked him and deprived him of his livelihood. He said: “Here am I all by myself, and still the evil one has beaten me. I might as well return to the community. Wherever one lives, the need for effort, patience and God’s help never abates.” He rose up and went back, a wiser and more peaceful fellow.

Likewise, no matter how we try to separate ourselves from the realities of life and the problems of society, for us there is always the sense that, one way or another, we can be useful, we can participate somehow in lessening the isolation and pain in the world by encountering others and being of service, even if it's only with our ears and heart.

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light,” declared Isaiah, “Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death— upon them has the light shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; for the yoke of their burden you have broken.” In the absence of missiles and invaders in our midst – unlike others -- the shadow of death is meaninglessness and isolation and the great light is mutuality. The burdensome yoke is unshared pain and isolation: when cries go unanswered. Our joy is increased when the numbers of people we consider to be true friends increases, and when the spaces of the world we consider safe, welcoming and free to move around in grows.

Life can be scary. We live in a time when the majority of us would agree. When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he got outta Dodge – in this case Galilee. He made his home in Capernaum by the Sea so he could participate in a community, a place where his pain could be shared, his cries could be answered and his work bear fruit. Because had a plan. The prophecy of Isaiah had a greater meaning for Jesus than mere analgesia for his own grief over cousin John's brutal fate in Herod's house of horrors. Jesus knew he had work to accomplish. He also knew that it was work that by definition could not be accomplished alone, because it was the work of community -- the sharing of joy, the hearing of each other's cries, the breaking of burdens and healing of divisions – and so he had to have an organization.

Last week we heard John's version of the story, here we have Matthew: “As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew casting a net into the sea and said, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ Straightway they left their nets and followed him. He saw two other brothers,

James, a son of Zebedee and his brother John in the boat with their father mending their nets, and he called them too. Straightway they left their boat and their father, and followed Jesus.” This is most certainly not a call for everyone to abandon their parents; it is a statement of truth: there are sacrifices to be made, comfort zones to be expanded and sometimes left behind, paradigms to be shifted, habits to be broken, systems to be overhauled, if God’s light is to shine on everybody. That is the nature of the Kingdom.

Our commission too is to go out and make disciples for good; to make and nurture community, to encounter others one-on-one with the assumption – nay, the certain knowledge -- that we are with God’s children. We must understand that whatever the balance or imbalance of our worldly power and resources, we have common interests. We are to listen and engage carefully and consistently enough to discover those common interests and build friendships, alliances, enterprises on foundations of mutuality with the materials of benevolent power.

We are not bidden to curl up, count our blessings, close our eyes and hope that violence, tyranny and injustice bother others and not us. Chaos returns when everyone is expected to count on their own luck. Those of us who can must engage with and organize those who cannot. This is politics as the way of Christ. If we fish for each other, we can feed the world.

Paul wrote: “Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me that there are quarrels among you, that you say, “I belong to Paul,” or “I belong to Cephas.” Or ‘I’m a Conservative,’ ‘I’m a Liberal.’ ‘I’m a Democrat,’ ‘You’re a Republican.’ We are witnessing where that kind of thinking leads us. “Has Christ been divided?” asks Paul, “Was I crucified for you, or were you baptized in the name of Peter?” The only way to thrive is to belong to the big organization, which for us is the Body of Christ at work in the world. I must not act in the name of me, but of us. Struggles for wealth, significance

and heroic domination by so-called leaders and their instigators have led to all the troubles we have ever had. Think of how the world would look if we were all competing for the privilege of enabling others to thrive.

As Martin Luther King concluded, “The road ahead will not always be smooth. There will be still rocky places of frustration and meandering points of bewilderment. There will be inevitable setbacks. There will be moments when the buoyancy of hope will give way to the fatigue of despair. Our dreams will sometimes seem shattered and our ethereal hopes blasted. Difficult and painful as it is, we must walk on in the days ahead with an audacious faith in the future.”

Zimzum is the word from the Jewish Kabbalah that describes the one moment immediately preceding Creation, when God withdrew enough of God’s power from a particular space in the Universe to make room for the World. Our most creative acts proceed from the *zimzum* moments of possibility that follow one another in our lives continuously. Our most creative acts are those that make room for somebodies else – people, creatures, natural phenomena. The sparks of divine energy that remain trapped in pieces of the broken water jugs of the world are begging to be gathered. It is our task to begin gathering them today, so the world might be repaired and the future made possible.

Hymn 304 I come with joy to meet my Lord

I come with joy to meet my Lord, forgiven, loved, and free,
In awe and wonder to recall his life laid down for me.

As Christ breaks bread and bids us share, each proud division ends.
The love that made us makes us one, and strangers now are friends.

And thus with joy we meet our Lord. His presence, always near,
Is in such friendship better known: we see and praise him here.

Together met, together bound, we'll go our different ways
And as his people in the world we'll live and speak his praise.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRi49fLDvM>

Economics

There were strollers, outgrown, circulated till a wheel fell off.

Anna's infant RockaRoo went to Francesca then to Sophia
who gave it back to Anna when she had the twins.

Travel cribs traveled between homes and the green vest
Sophia knitted for Ming's first was worn by all the next babies.

Onesies, drawstring gowns, snap-legged overalls,

snowsuits, sweatpants, jeans, t-shirts, jumpers,

all sorted, washed, boxed then sent on

till they were sorted, washed, boxed and sent again.

Pj's worn to that silkiest perfection, then worn wholly through,
reluctantly tossed.

A blue dress with applique lilacs was the favorite of each girl

and who knew where the velvet blazer came from,

but it did the job for more than one holiday concert.

Even this year, a photograph of Francesca's youngest in Prague,
handsome in that hand-me-down wool pea coat. Sophia hit *reply all*:

Our last? No! Well, fits yours better than it ever did mine.

Victoria Redel