

Saturday 5/23/20 cont.

Cleansing Action

Trash and debris litters the roadsides, alleys, ditches and sidewalks of our community. That debris is not the kind of spill we want to spread in our community. Take some time and a garbage bag and clean up an area of your neighborhood either as an individual or as a group. Include children, and talk about where some of the trash comes from, and how we can be better stewards of God's creation through recycling.



GOBIN CHURCH
A United Methodist Community for All

Monday, May 18, 2020

Acts 27:39-44

<https://tinyurl.com/y7u4pxn7>

Ponder

“In the morning light they saw a bay with a sandy beach.” The first sentence of verse 39 sets a beautiful scene that can be easy to imagine. The sunlight of a new day cresting the horizon. Smooth waters washing onto an expanse of yellow-white sand perfect for stretching out one's body to relax and to listen to the sounds of ocean and sea birds. A vacation spot. Have you been to such a place? Are you yearning in these days to get to a peaceful retreat? For Paul and the multitude on their ship, the sight of land was welcome. They didn't know what land it was, the scripture says, but they were glad to see it and made for the beach. They were escaping a situation of being confined, where many were prisoners, and the guards were in as much peril on the stormy seas as their charges. But they were all in it together. To me, it sounds pretty similar to our situation today – shut away in our homes to guard our health, wondering when this dangerous pandemic is going to end, hoping we have enough toilet paper to last through our confinements. For some folks in the boat with Paul, the solution was to kill the prisoners so they could not escape the shipwreck. But one person, the centurion who had come to know Paul, stopped the panic and the knee jerk reactions, and gave sensible orders. When the group listened, they all survived. They reached that beach safely. Praise God. Getting through tough situations is often an unwanted test of our faith, our courage, our determination. May we be like Paul and the centurion, who want to bring everyone along with us to safety, sacrificing no one, and leaving no one behind in these unprecedented times.

Pray

Dear God, You calm the stormy seas. You point us away from our own tragedies. Even though we've stored supplies and done drills anticipating disaster, our current realities have left many of us breathless with confusion and disappointed by change. We cling to you, Lord, as we grab hold of the planks and floating debris that were once our fortresses. We trust in you to help us reach land safely. Amen.

In Action

Do you have old pictures or videos of vacations or family trips? Maybe photo albums stored away that show black and white images of long-ago trips in classic cars, or fishing trips to distant lakes? Get those out, as a family if possible, and share stories of good times with your kids. Talk about some of the people no longer with us today. Did someone have a lucky fishing hat he always wore? Plan for a future trip together. Maybe tomorrow's trip will only be a walk around the neighborhood, or a hike in a nature park. But plan for the future together, and plan to take photos so others who aren't there can share your adventure in the future.

Tuesday, May 19, 2022

1 Peter 3:8-12

<https://tinyurl.com/yc27y8zx>

Ponder

In today's passage, Peter quotes Psalm 34: 12-16 and asks his audience to resist payback when they are mistreated and to bless those who are hostile toward them. This passage brings to mind all of the service workers who are faithfully doing their jobs, but receive abuse from customers who aren't happy. Maybe the soda fountain isn't open. Maybe the shopping carts are impossibly tangled together. Sometimes the order from the drive-through didn't include the right combination of sandwiches and fries. Do our tongues lash out in anger at the person who is working for minimum wage? Do we prayerfully thank the employee who brings our online orders to the curb for pickup? When tension is high, and the masks get scratchy and hot, it can be tempting to lash out in frustration. We know it is better to share peace and smiles and understanding, but it takes so much effort that we can't seem to spare right now. This passage asks us to shift from grouchy receiving mode to positive giving mode. Peter tells us to give a blessing in return, even when the order is wrong. Giving is better than receiving. Let's focus on giving blessings.

Pray

Dear God, You freely give your blessings, and I've come to expect them. I'll even say that I know I am blessed, but the challenge for me is acknowledging that I can bless others also. Help me to see each person as your blessed child. Help me to restrain my snappy comebacks and my angry retorts, and to boost the spirits of those around me so they will see your love shining through in this difficult time. Amen.

Be Action

We can't touch others with our hands or hugs to comfort or console, but we can touch them with our heartfelt words of gratitude and blessing. When we witness someone take an angry word from others, step up to flip on the light of love with positive eye contact and kind words that affirm your appreciation of the person's efforts.

Wednesday, May 20, 2020

Psalms 93

<https://tinyurl.com/y7dr278x>

Ponder

The Lord rules! God has conquered the forces of chaos and created a stable world. I read this short Psalm and tend to think, Oh, if only that were true today. God tamed the unruly waters in the exodus out of Egypt. Can God tame today's flood of information that flows over the internet and social media? Every time I turn on the television, or check my Twitter feed, or jump on Facebook to see what friends are doing, there's a undercurrent of dread and anxiety and misinformation that wants to suck me under with it. Not to mention hundreds of advertisements telling me I need to exercise more, eat less and buy better insurance. But wait! There's more! God has given me the wisdom to turn off the television and to disconnect from the negativity of our world.

Not to mention hundreds of advertisements telling me I need to exercise more, eat less and buy better insurance. But wait! There's more! God has given me the wisdom to turn off the television and to disconnect from the negativity of our world. I don't mean to hide my head in the sand. But I can choose to tune into all the good that comes from the Lord, such as the fertile soil, blossoming spring flowers and trees, the laughter of children, the scents from my neighbor's grill. Look at the hope of a young couple standing hand-in-hand looking at a house from the sidewalk and wondering if it's the house where they can continue their future together. The Lord, in majesty, has decorated this world with promise and hope. We must focus on that reality.

Pray

Thank you, God! You Rule! Look at you, all robed in majesty and strength. Ordering the seas to be calm and setting the world firmly in place. I can't do that. None of us can. So forgive us when we think we can and we try to do your job. All praise to you for your goodness, mercy, love and the grace you shower on us. You are awesome! Amen.

Show Action

It's mid-week, or Hump Day, as some people (and camels) say. We get over the hump in the middle of the week and it's all downhill to the weekend. Do a happy dance with friends or family. Be silly in joy and laughter, celebrating the day. Maybe you can grab a purple scarf or a vibrant cloth and wave it in the air, and thank God for getting you to today, and for sending you toward tomorrow. Praise God with your words and movements, and tell your children to send up their good vibes so they and rain happiness down on everything, the way God showers us with love.

Thursday, May 21, 2020

Acts 1:9-11

<https://tinyurl.com/yassk3ng>

Ponder

In my Christian calendar, this day is marked Ascension of the Lord. It's an awesome event with a short description. Jesus rises up and disappears in a cloud. I can imagine folks standing around with their mouths open, their brows furrowed, looking up, puzzled. And then two guys show up – poof! They don't give the explanation we want to hear. They don't say why, or how, or when. Have you ever been in that kind of situation? Something happens totally unexpected, and you're thinking “What just happened here?” No one else knows either. Sometimes, it's easier and maybe even best to just shake your head and move on. I'll think about that later, you say. It stays with you though. You ponder, and you hold it in your heart, and your thoughts return to it over time. It's like a seed that you watch over, waiting for it to grow. I like to think that in the grand scheme of things, I certainly can't comprehend the meaning of all things, but I can nurture seeds so they grow and bloom into fruitfulness. Do I have to understand how everything works? Or know the grand plan? Or solve the great mysteries?

No. But I can wonder, and hold a seed to plant in my heart, and be inspired to love as Jesus did, and be open to the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

Dear God, You understand. You know. We don't. We want to understand, hoping that might make us act better or love more, or hate less. Forgive us our hesitations, our open-mouthed pauses of uncertainty. Help us to open our hearts to the wonderful, marvelous and exotic things about you that can lead us to peace and fruitfulness and the transformation of this world into your kingdom. Lead us and guide us. Amen.

Create Action

Learn about something new. Have your children or grandchildren teach you something they learned in school that you don't understand. Maybe it's sign language or how a 3D printer works or how to make a craft. Maybe their explanation to you doesn't make sense, but accept it for what it is. And remember that sometimes, your explanations don't make sense to them either.

Friday, May 22, 2020

Ephesians 2:1-7

<https://tinyurl.com/ybvXuwpv>

Ponder

Mercy and grace. In today's Scripture, the Ephesians need to be reminded what God did to save them and to make them a part of his body. Do we ever take for granted that God loves us, and oh yeh, everybody else too ... probably ... even those folks over there. Why do we consider some people as "those folks over there"? Are we so busy "staying in our lanes" that we don't want to interact with others who aren't like us, and who don't understand the way we do? Try looking at the people who slip unnoticed through the cracks of society. Is there a lonely widow or widower? An insecure middle school student? A struggling single parent? Now that you're looking at them, try to really see them and their situation. Invest some of your time in their life. Of all the things I treasure most about people I don't know well – church friends, neighbors, distant relatives – I treasure the time we spent sitting and talking. Maybe we talked about nothing important, but I sometimes got a feel for what was important to them. Or what caused them to wonder. Or maybe if they were shy and too polite to tell me to be quiet, they picked up something from me. Imagine Jesus sitting and talking with you. It's a two-way conversation, and it can't be all questions from you to him. Remember his parables? He is not the best explainer when we want obvious answers. Experience the grace and mercy of Jesus as he hears you out about things, and be open to what he says in return. Listen like an Ephesian hearing the letter from Paul.

Prayer

Dear God, Teach us to share grace and mercy in a way that exposes your love for the world. We pray for spiritual wisdom and we thank you for Jesus, who is our peace and cornerstone. Teach us to listen so that we may learn good and helpful things on this journey. We pray we may be a blessing to someone today, so they will recognize your goodness and mercy, too. Amen.

Purposeful Action

Get out of your lane, or at least let someone else into your lane. Take flowers to a shut-in, or a homeless shelter, and leave them outside on the porch or where they won't be a tripping hazard. If the person is willing, sit 6 feet apart to talk and listen.

Saturday, May 23, 2020

John 8:21-30

<https://tinyurl.com/y7xwqwp6>

Ponder

Jesus is teaching in the temple. He's explaining who he is to people who can't or don't want to understand. How frustrating that might be. I recall being frustrated by trying to teach one of my older children her multiplication tables several years ago. A retired teacher friend comforted me with the thought that children learn things when they are developmentally ready to learn it. I laid off the repetition, and sure enough, one day a few weeks later the multiplication tables clicked for my child. "You see," my teacher friend said, "I learned a long time ago I could 'teach' until I was blue in the face, but until each spongy little brain was ready to absorb it, they weren't going to 'learn' it. Sometimes, it takes a while for the sponge to use its capacity to soak up the spill." So what Jesus is spilling here in this Scripture probably takes a mighty big sponge with a lot of absorption capacity. And it takes patience to let it be absorbed. My first inclination when a spill is happening is to clean it up fast and stop the spread. Surrounding stuff might get ruined! When Jesus spills his truth to us, is it easy or hard to let that spill keep flowing? It can get messy. The spill might ruin other stuff we have sitting around – preconceived notions, factions, information silos – if we let Jesus and love spill onto everything. If the capacity of our hearts is not enough to absorb what Jesus is spilling, maybe its time to wring out the junk in our hearts, so we can soak up some Jesus.

Pray

Dear God, We acknowledge we should be Jesus sponges all of our lives. He has spilled your goodness and mercy on this world. Thank you for that blessing. Help us through these difficult times and give us perspective to see, that spilling love out of ourselves makes a beautiful stain in the name of Jesus. Amen.