

Sermon July 21, 2024

Children's Time

What do you love about this place?

David wants to build a beautiful place to honor God?

"I don't need a house!"

What does God need?

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

The Summer Day

Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean —

the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down —
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

Stories of Our Faith

Bandit

Otis Moss III

Balance gospel shout and blues moan

Today we heard stories that remind us of where we come from... We hear gospel shouts and blues moans... stories that tell remind us how wild and precious life is.

When David wants to build a temple for God, God tells him: "Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day." God reminds David that God is bigger than any one place and cannot be contained by people. I wonder how often we are like David – trying to contain God to fit our perceptions and limited understanding... and when we do that, we miss our own glimpses of God's Holy Realm.

In Jesus' ministry, that Holy Realm came breaking through in new ways... showing us how being in relationship with God can change us. Some people understood, but most tried to understand his ministry through the lens of tradition and "the way we've always done things," and missed out on the miracle of God's presence on earth.

Today, as Jesus once again seeks a place of rest... we get a glimpse of Jesus climbing out of a boat and seeking a deserted place to find a place to pray. He and his disciples understand the pull of anxiety and worry, as they hear the news of John the Baptist's death... they moan and the blues surround them.

But that longed for peace and quiet is denied them. A group follows him... a group who looks an awful lot like us. Some are looking for the restoration of David's kingdom. They remember the joy of the good ole days... the blues moan. Others find hope in the gospel shout that echoes around Jesus everywhere he goes. No matter who they are, they seek a glimpse of God's Holy Realm. Jesus' heart goes out to them because he sees a flock in need of a shepherd.

Jesus sits down and begins to speak. He tells them about love... he speaks of God's blessings... he heals them... He gives them the gift of God's sacred presence. Not in a temple or a tabernacle – he goes to where the people are and ministers to them.

God's Holy Realm is not a place we can walk or drive to. It is all around us – we just need to open our eyes to see it in our midst. God's Realm is found wherever two or three gather in the name of Christ. The Realm is found wherever we claim the blessings that God has given us and share them with our neighbors. God's sacred Realm is where strangers become brothers and sisters and where enemies provide loving care. The Realm of God is an attitude of heart. The Kingdom is God's Beloved Community filled with gospel shouts.

Everything we have and everything that we are comes from God. And when we recognize that in our own lives, we see the coming Realm. And we can live there together as we plan what to do with our one wild and precious life.

I once heard the story of newborn twins who were born premature. One twin was strong and healthy but the other was smaller... weaker... and had a variety of health concerns. The doctors were not sure if she would make it through the night.

A nurse, against hospital procedures, tried something new. She took the stronger baby and placed her in the incubator, next to her twin sister. If it was to be her sister's last night, she wanted them to be together... just as they had from the beginning. The stronger sister reached out and touched her sister. Almost immediately the weaker baby's heart rate stabilized, her blood pressure went up to normal. She became stronger and healthier when she was with the one she loved. Blues moans transformed into gospel shouts

When we are with the one's we love, we all become stronger and healthier too. And so does the entire Body of Christ. Here, in that loving care, we find God's Holy Realm. Here, in the midst of God's own Beloved Community, we discover the peace of God, which is beyond all understanding... which will keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God.

God is faithful and God's faithfulness endures forever. Do not worry because God will never let us down during our wild and precious life. And that's worth shouting about!

Invitation to Give

Each week we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." God promises to provide us with what we need to live today so we may see tomorrow. When we think of what we actually have, though, we have more than enough. We give honor and thanks to God when we make our generous offering from our abundance.