

Re-Opening To Divine Presence:

"For Salty Times Just As These"

Mark 9: 38-50, James 5: 13-16, 19
September 30, 2018

Prayer: When I pray for someone else, I ask God to see the other as God does.

Sin: Failings, missing the mark

Hell: Separation

Salt: Courage...bringing freedom and peace

The images Jesus uses are so not like Him, so severe, it must be this is really important especially coming on the heels of the disciples avoiding the issue and so arguing about who is the greatest, their pettiness about where power should reside...with them! Vs. being connected to positive power in all its various forms and origins.

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Jesus came for times such as these....

He comes to places in your life and in our world where fear and dread have overwhelmed

(illness, financial distress, broken relationships,  
so many kinds of suffering)

Places and times that overwhelm *you* and make it difficult for you to see how things could ever be different...

to the point that you sometimes have not only given up...  
but give over your accountability...  
your personal power...gone it alone...

and often then, unconsciously, yet sometimes consciously,

place stumbling blocks in the ways of little ones  
(children and those most vulnerable).

Stumbling blocks: The usual ways of the world...often THE  
what and how you usually do what you do  
and don't do.

Because you've been seduced by the way things seem...thinking things could never be different!

Don't fall for this!  
Re-set/ Re-adjust/ Re-focus.

As we succumb to the seductive, destructive,  
defensive ways of the world...  
giving up on ourselves and the world,

we let "the way things seem" become to us the way things really are. But rarely are things the way they seem!

In times such as these,  
we often give in to the malaise of life  
and give over our power.

In times such as these,  
we don't look to see that the everyday choices we make  
have the power to make a difference in our lives  
and in God's world.

And Jesus says...then beware...  
better you were thrown into the sea  
than live your life like this.

If you choose to live your life as if your choices don't have impact, that viewpoint will  
kill you off for sure...  
kill your life essence/your spirit  
in even more devastating ways than losing your life.

Worse than death is living without integrity...

living in fear and dread,  
living in abusive relationships...

sabotaging others, turning a blind eye,  
throwing your hands up in disgust,  
looking the other way,  
getting even,

Worse than death is living without integrity...

over-spending and under-spending/hoarding,  
living in anger and projecting that onto everyone around you without an inward look.

Worse than death...living without the grace of  
do-overs...living without peace...of mind and nation.

Living on your own. Isolation and separation. Death.

Don't fall for this way of living...it's not living at all!

Re-start.

Better to live maimed.

Better to live poorer than you might like to live  
in order to do the things with your money  
that have integrity and meaning.

Better to live divorced than in abusive relationship  
or in relationships which smother your wholeness,

better to say no to the promotion than take a job  
that takes you away from your family  
and yourself, better.

Better to accept someone's genuine efforts to help rather than critique whether they're doing it right or your way! (Like the disciples did!)

Better to vote than not,  
stir up debate than sit quiet.

Better to risk what comes next *than to* sit sure and secure in a self-centered, self-absorbed or woe is me, destructive situation.

Not sure how you are living...then look at how your choices affect the little ones in your life...in our lives.

This is so important...and so true...that Jesus uses very dramatic, intense images to make his point.

These words in Mark do not sound like the Jesus who healed so many blind eyes and crippled limbs!

But realize, Jesus is not talking about destroying ourselves,  
rather he talks about releasing ourselves

from anybody or anything...any mind set...  
that has addictive dominion over us.

No pity parties needed or excuses accepted.

Nothing can separate you from the love of God...the life giving spirit of oneness within the universe that is always on the side of right relationship, justice, peace for all...nothing can separate you from the life you long for...**except you!**

And He goes on to cheerlead saying we have the salt within us to do what it is we need to do. We have the courage of our faith's convictions...our relationship with God lives out as integrity.

It's all we ever really have and it is everything we need.

And no one can take our integrity from us or keep us apart from each other...unless you let them!

And if your salt, your courage, your resolve

loses its saltiness, energy, confidence,  
salt yourselves...

find and be with each other, in peace, and pray for  
and with each other.

Maintain peacefully your own distinct character and service within the company of  
other salty folks.  
But shake it out/up together!

It takes a community to fill a salt shaker...be a church...  
to raise an adult!

It's not a safe world out there.  
It is risky to do these things...  
but not as risky as not doing them.

So much more than may seem possible is possible  
as you  
live with holy integrity and support each other  
in prayer and action,  
living your integrity each day.....together!

Take the risk. Pray and stay!

Pat Bowne once said:  
Prayer is preparing ourselves to find the good in what God is doing!

Philip Yancey says:  
When I pray for another person, I am praying for God to open my eyes so that I can see  
that person as God does, and then enter into the stream of love that God already directs  
toward that person.

(Puts you in some really good company there, Pat!)

We are praying, O Holy One!

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It is a huge risk to use your influence with others
against the overt power of the most powerful.

Often, there is no safety net.

You may have to choose
between your own safety or your integrity.

An integrity which affects all those around you...
family friends, the little ones, strangers...
better fill up that salt shaker!

And, it is true...to be faithful, to live with integrity...
we often have to choose to put comfort and safety on hold!

BUT, realize the comfort and safety you already have is really a place of privilege from
which you CAN be courageous.

If you have a roof over your head, food to eat...
a car to drive...
bus fare....a friend to call...
if you can read...

you have privilege by worldly standards...
even as you have needs of your own.

You can be courageous.

From your position of privilege,
how might you be able to act powerfully
within your own life as well as

on behalf of these little ones...
those at risk, whose power is weakened, and voice silenced?

What are the stories of risk happening today?

Who is taking a risk on behalf of others? ...with others?
Is it you? Why? Why not?

To what places of injustice, places that lack integrity...
is God calling you...
is it in your family, your neighborhood?
Are there issues in your city or nation calling you?

Really...what individuals and communities wait on your actions and courage?

**How will you gather the courage to go
where you are called
and do what you are called to do?**

But first...think on this:

Who is right now risking for you! Courageous for you...
coming alongside, prompting you,
inviting you to be accountable in the ways you

think, talk, act
so you maintain your integrity? Who?

Our wisdom teachings today lead us to realize courage, saltiness,
is in large part dependent upon being prayerful (perhaps not as you traditionally have
thought about prayer)
and being in community.

To know our failings/sins...our real life stories, *and then* share them with another
trusted other...

shifts the burden of carrying our failings on our own which limits possibilities. You've
experienced this!!

As we share our real stories, we may see in the eyes
of the other how God sees us.

And as we listen, prayerfully, we come to see others
the way God does them.

We...all...get bolder! We re-open.

What do you notice about your boldness to act
when you weave an awareness of God's presence
into the fabric of your days and nights...into your choices?

Let me ask you that this way....

~What are you enduring right now that is killing you?

Does anyone know?

~What are the stumbling blocks to your happiness?

Have you shared this?

~What is it you allow to keep you from the love of God and the wholeness of life?

Is that the choice you really want to make?

(grumpiness, insecurity, anxiousness, isolation, denial)

**Do you have the courage to do as Jesus
would have you do?**

It will be painful you know. Well, you know it will be!

...like cutting off part of yourself.

But you do not bleed alone. You will not bleed out!

And you do not have to use willpower alone,
good intentions alone, New Year's resolutions alone.

You can turn to the power of prayer/faith...with each other...
power that comes as you share with another believer
your true reality and need...

letting them serve you that cold cup of water in *just listening*.

If only you will let them!

...if we will share what is going on!

When we “confess” and pray our true needs with another,
we find a power...a saltiness...comes to us that we have not known till then.

Like in James' wisdom.

You see, you cannot live life on your own.

God made us to need each other.

And we are called to offer each other that cold cup of water,
to be that salt,
to bring each other back when we wander.

We need each other.

Life is preserved in community.

Together we have so much more courage and power.

~How is it we here, your Tippe community, can support you?

Please tell us.

Remember: faith is made for times such as these!

We offer you prayer yes...and supportive action together...
if you'll only tell us...

cause we're not really good at reading minds!

We come to worship because we want to become more *effective* followers along the

way...
because these times are indeed hard!

We come because we long to bring the power of faith
to our lives,

for our own peace and joy and the betterment
of our families and communities.

We want community...we long to be known and know others.

So we come.
We are a praying, salty community!

Life shakes us up.

And Jesus comes for times such as these!

Re-mind, re-connect, re-invigorate, re-acquaint, re-move,
re-awaken, re-vive, re-frame, re-group, re-pond,
re-member, re-imagine, re-frain, re-new, re-purpose, re-lax, re-align, re-purpose, re-
group, re-deem, re-store, re-ally!