

*The Road Home:*

*"Home Is Where the Heart, Soul, Mind,  
Strength Are!"*

Mark 12:28-34, The Wisdom of Solomon  
3:1-9  
November 4, 2018

*An adaptation of Ann Weems' "Touch in  
Church"*

**A Conversation within One's  
Head/Heart on this All Souls Day in  
Church...our Faith Home...we listen  
in:**

Church as home? Home within  
ourselves? God as home?  
Gee...What is all this feeling and  
touching in church?

I mean, on this All Soul's Day...  
maybe I get it that we would reach out  
to each other's loss ...but....

*it used to be* a person could come to  
church and sit in the pew and not be  
bothered

by all this caring, and sharing,  
and certainly not bothered  
by...touching.

I used to be able to come to church and  
leave untouched.

Now I have to be nervous about what  
might be expected of me.

I have to worry about responding to the  
person sitting next to me.

*Oh, how I wish it could* be the way it used  
to be;

I could just ask the person next to me:  
How are you?

And the person could answer, "Oh, just  
fine",  
and we'd both go away...

*safely strangers* who have known each  
other for twenty years!

But now worship invites us to look at  
each other.

And, I'm worried about that hurt look I  
saw in that woman's eyes.

I'm concerned, because when the pastor  
asks us to pass the peace, the man I  
bumped into  
in the aisle and so *had to greet*,  
held my hand so tightly I wondered  
"what's wrong".

Now I'm upset  
because the lady next to me cried and  
then apologized

and said it was because I was so kind  
and she needed a friend right now.

Now I have to get involved.

**Now I have to suffer when this  
community suffers. ...when anyone in  
it suffers.**

*Actually, ...when I feel part of it all, I do suffer a bit...*

**For another's pain or confusion. I am conflicted and do suffer when "put-downs" are heard cause we act foolishly as we're trying to do what is righteous/just ...to touch lives!**

...I suffer as this church looks foolish doing gardens, doing 130 overnight prayer vigils in a row, hosts 300 literacy campers somehow each summer and now beyond...

**Yeah...AND**

....I suffer when someone asks me to help with that!

...I suffer a little being asked to tend to the needs of a child here or at ASLC camp,

...suffer when I'm asked to play an active role in Milwaukee naming and acting on racism, just environments, and economic opportunities and care for others.

Suffer! All this takes time and resources. Mine!

You have to show up! Not just figuratively, actually!

But, my better self....well,  
while it may seem foolish to onlookers, a bit deadly,  
while it may seem to us...at times...seem like others are trying to kill off our spirit...

I do know that what's really going on is that we're responding to a divine invitation to let go of outcomes...and do what we can... to trust that what is hard at hand may indeed be purifying us like gold, within God's grace.

That's what's beginning to happen.

And now, other churches and non -profits are asking *this* church to lead!

Darn!

**Now I have to be more than a person coming to observe a service.**

I have to participate in what's going on or it won't go on!

I have to be here in case you need me and I never know when that will be!  
And you have to come cause...what if I need you?

Well, if I'm going to be honest with myself,  
your being here changes everything for me and everyone else who is here...  
maybe even for those who aren't here!

Imagine what it would be like if all of us came to be touched and to touch every week  
on a Sunday, Monday, Wednesday!

Why don't we?

**Oh, yeah that touching thing, vulnerability thing, commitment thing. Busy  
schedules.**

You know that man last week told me I'd never know how much it mattered to him to  
talk with me  
as we shared over coffee at Tippe Café...

when all I did was smile and tell him I know something about what it is to be lonely.

And I wonder if it just might be time now...for me to go to one of those  
Circles or LW events, Centering Groups....

for the hurting, the loneliness...mine,  
the assurance...mine,  
the shared wisdom...ours,  
the touching.

Lord, I'm not big enough, confident enough,  
to touch and be touched! ...at least not on my own.

The giving and receiving scares me.

~What if I disappoint somebody?  
~What if I'm too pushy?  
~What if I linger too long?  
~What if somebody ignores me?

Even more frightening, what if I do it well? Oh my!  
What if somebody truly touches me?

Lord, sometimes I'm not so sure that I deserve to be touched or that I am worthy of touching someone else....

because so much of my own life feels out of control...  
no one knows about my shortcomings the way I do!

And now they ask me touch others  
not only with a hand shake...

but with a commitment to be here,  
**to support instead of observe,**

and not only that...but to stretch my wallet...  
the place where I really live...  
not just stretch my spirit.

They say it is for my good as well as the church's ministry.

And not just some little adjustment...  
but truly give more of myself.

Can I stretch for others? Should I? Would I?

Will someone else stretch for me?

Well, I guess someone is...already has...stretched for me...

that's why the lights are already on,  
our pastor is already working with us,  
this church's mission is strong,  
and members and friends are growing within....  
**And, really, I have done so little differently  
in my life to support it!**

I guess I'm likely to walk any road than the one that leads me here. It's easier to make myself feel at home other places...even though I do know this is my home in God and God is at home in me.

Still...I am often tempted to turn away, walk away than touch and be touched.

How can I love myself, be at home with myself?

Let alone love You, love my neighbor?

This is indeed a touchy situation!

YET, here's what I notice at this church:

I'm noticing the focus isn't on what's broken but on what's working. What folks do well not on what they don't do well.

The focus is not on what's fair. Some will always be more able or willing to do more and some not!

Here folks know fair is in the long run, they are in it for the long run!

And it's not all about them!

Seems there's a different question folks here are asking.

...it's not about what's fair.

What is about then? (Ask them the congregation.)

**Is it:** What's life giving and supports the common good?

That's a better question and folks *here seem* to be centering on this question.

I'm noticing folks going out of their way to help...

to support a new worship and membership and education model...comfortable or not.

I'm noticing Tippe is right sizing itself because the people who are Tippe are right sizing their own lives and priorities right now....

balancing their lives, wanting presence in their lives,  
all year round.

Willing to live their faith over holding on tightly to short lived personal comfort.

Here I notice, folks are wanting to be personal with each other and be comfort-able-rs.

I'm noticing the focus is not about doing as little as you can get away with while still looking good....

trusting someone else will pick up the slack...

**the focus seems to be on....YOU Lord!**

Like Jesus' focus....like when the scribe invites us not to give only cheap, already burnt offerings but real devotion.

....loving myself!

...loving my neighbor as myself...touching their lives!

....loving my God with all that I am...  
letting God touch me!

....not just my thoughts, not just my prayers,  
not just my works, not just money  
**touch....all of me, all the time.**

Seems that loving myself and my neighbor *is* loving God.

Seems loving God, you cannot help but love self and neighbor.

Gee, it can work both ways. **Whether through the front door or the back door, loving gets you in to a living room!**

Here in this touchy church it's not about thinking right thoughts  
**but living with understanding and courage and heart ...feeling life!**

**Letting life touch me!**

Touching others. Being touched.

But....what if nobody...but me...touches? Gives more?

What if nobody but me shows up?

Would it matter...would it be OK?

It's sorta like that old saying:

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there,

does its falling make a sound?

If *only* I give, I show up, does it count, is it enough?  
Will it make a difference even if no one sees?

**Wait....do I only give if someone is looking?  
Do I only care when I can see what I get in return?**

**Do I only do the things easy for me to do?  
Do I only want to touch but not be touched?**

**Expect of others what I am not willing to do *myself*?**

Do I mean it when I say:  
“The peace of God be with you.” “And you.” “And you.”

Lord, here in this touchy church, I can't resist meaning it!

I'm touched by the peace here, I'm enveloped by peace!

I find I do care about that person next to me!

I find I am involved, even if I don't want to be!  
I am at home and I belong and the ministry matters more than someone's grumbling,  
any one personality, challenges at hand,  
my weekly splurges of coffee or cigarettes  
or even my cell phone. It matters here.

**And I'm scared. Nothing is the same.**

O Lord, be here...be home within me.  
Touch me, Lord, so I can touch and be touched!

So I can care and be cared for!

So I can share my life with all those others who **belong to You!**

**So I can find a way to be really kind  
to the really real me...  
and be home with You.**

Give me Solomon's vision and the scribe's wisdom.

All this touching in church – Lord, it's changing me!

Maybe I am...on the road home.

Maybe I am beginning to live what I believe beyond appearances....and Sunday mornings.

**Our lives, how we live them,  
witness to what we really believe....  
Lord, may I truly be on the road...my way...home.**