

The Way Is Before Us...Let Us Begin Again:

"Risk and Revelation: An Opportune Time"

Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; The Gospel of Mary 9:17-24, 26-28
March 10, 2019...First Week of Lent

Teaching to Gospel of Mary:

Even though Mary Magdalene is mentioned more than any other woman in the NT, she has been given little importance in the Christian tradition.

Remember who compiled the books of the Bible and why...a directive of Emperor Constantine bringing Christianity to be the state religion but at the price of synthesizing the message and translating it from Aramaic to Greek.

Be aware, also, of the place of women in the culture at that time. The early church movement was house church movement and often hosted in the homes of wealthy women. As the movement grew too large to be hosted in homes, public leadership moved to men. This evolved into the Universal/Catholic Church.

Mary Magdalene, a Jewish woman from Galilee, most likely a single woman or widow of some wealth, she

became a devoted follower of Jesus after he healed her of her "seven demons".

She traveled with Jesus and entourage and supported the movement financially. She witnesses the crucifixion, dresses Jesus' body, witnesses the burial, and discovers the tomb empty. She was the first to see the resurrected Jesus.

And still little mention or regard in our tradition.

Probably in part because by the end of the Middle Ages, the Church conflated the stories of 3 different women in the NT erroneously

and concluded that Mary Magdalene was a redeemed prostitute, which was validated by Pope Gregory in 591CE although this had no historical grounding.

We know better now. Writings attributed to her as well as many other authors, not previously included in the Bible,

have been found over the last 100 years in the Middle East including an Egyptian find of ancient documents in the 1940's.

In these writings, she is revealed as a teacher and leader in the Christian community. And, the writings attributed to her are believed to have been written concurrent with the Gospel of Luke.

Mary's gospel teachings are based upon her first-hand experience of the Risen Christ revealing Christ's wisdom shared with her.

At the heart of her gospel is her positive holding of what it means to be a human being. We are to welcome our "true" humanity into our very selves. We are created in light and blessing. A good thing to be fully proclaimed and reclaimed!

We are to be more fully human...as was Christ. Her focus is on how Jesus makes all of us holy each day through our own humanity vs His saving and forgiving us once and for all.

Our focus is to be really human beings!
(At Tippe, we say we are to be more fully human and so more fully divine!)

We are created truly good. Sin is an illusion of our reality.

This flies in the face of the notion of Original Sin which came through St. Augustine in the 16th Century.

The good news then...is we are not trying to escape
our humanity, but embrace it.
Jesus death was not an act of atonement, the key to salvation,
but an event inviting us to also overcome the many deaths
we experience through the teachings and messages of Jesus life.

In her writings, as in many ancient documents,
stories about ascending to God are actually about a person's spiritual process while living ...
the ascent of the soul is daily and we are to unit with God over coming temptations of this world.

Ascent is about one's journey toward goodness in one's inner consciousness, one's
behavior, and one's relationships.

It is what and how people *think* that gives sin importance and power, and keeps us from being true human beings.

She claims for us a radical new ability of a life in Christ.
This does not reject personal responsibility but rejects
the sense that humans are hopelessly corrupt.

This feels to me more like the Jesus of Borg, Crosson, and Spong. Think on these things. Listen to this reading...

“Risk and Revelation: An Opportune Time”

So, we have moved through Bethlehem noting a newness born in us that came to life.

We journeyed on, knowing our path would have us revisit old truths but from a new perspective and so find deeper truths.

And now we begin again. Jesus coaches us to walk the talk of who we are into everyday life. Lent...when we turn toward that which has meaning and watch what falls away as we do.

And yes...it's a bit risky! What's revealed may feel risky!

We go together...not of one mind, but one spirit. It will be difficult because of distractions, lack of confidence...we are both curious and doubtful.

But we have power to shape the journey...positively or negatively. We can shape it was joy as we calm down, don't get angry or react to what is revealed.

Ultimately, we do have to go it alone in the everyday moments of our lives but we can go in...love. We can take a breath, reset, form our intention and look for deeper truth so we become more fully human, more fully divine. (Wisdom from Monday and Wednesday worship this week.)

It will be risky. There will be revelations.

The way goes before us. We begin, again. We travel to Jerusalem. Jerusalem...a place of confrontation with authorities...inner and outer authorities in our lives.

It is the place of death and resurrection.

Letting go of what no longer works well and finding new life and energy for being that new human being.

~~

So the OT scripture refers to the land of milk and honey.

But, we know: milk and honey, come and go.

Here today and gone tomorrow.

But boy, when we're in the land of milk and honey, we are tempted to forget it is God who sustains us!

Now living in such a land, the Hebrew people stop to remember their story... from where they came, how God provided, when life did not, and that the story isn't over.

Together they find strength in the story, their collective one story as well as their individual stories, knowing deeply they journey together.....

and together they rejoice in the moment. Risk and Revelation.

Confessing their faith, they give freely their first fruits to God in support of helping all others,

and then live abundantly enjoying the remaining fruits of their labor. You see....there really is enough to go around!

Can you tell the story? ...our story?

Not just our faith story about Jesus, but our story here, the Tippe story...

at least the part since you've been here?

It's your story, too...are you aware of what's been happening in you since you've first come here...have you noticed what's happening in others as well?

This place changes lives.

If you have any doubt about that...that this place changes people, ask the person sitting next to you today. Do it now. ;)

And everything that has happened here...

blessings and woes,

easy times and challenging ones,

all the feelings and situations of our time together over the years,

before and since my presence here...makes this so!

And here leaders (the elders and deacons, the ministry team members, you and I) are not afraid of risking.

We're not worried about what may be revealed.

We're more worried about not risking, than risking!

What we are unaware of vs what may be revealed!

We know what it means to be a human being alive.

So...Have you connected yourself to the Tippe story yet...in ways so powerful that it brings the depth of your faith to the tip of your tongue...

the bend in your knee,

the look in your eyes,

the angst in your soul and the fold in your wallet?

....like the Israelites so long ago?

This isn't about money, this isn't about Tippe,
this is about you...your well-being!

You see, every day is a wilderness, desert experience for us. Hard situations come up. Hard choices have to be made.

If you do not know who you are in the story of believers and stand firmly in your shared faith,

the "devil" (inner and outer ones) will tempt you to question your identity ...and try on false ones.

Temptations, all those forms of power abused, surround you.

And temptation is more likely to come in the seemingly innocuous.

Temptation rarely expresses itself in a form obviously evil.

If someone came to you saying,

“Wouldn't you like to make a wreck of your life and bring shame to all who know you by stealing,
committing adultery,
or destroying your health with drugs or food?

You would say, “Are you nuts? No thanks, I'm not interested.”

But temptation usually cloaks itself in something seemingly harmless, even virtuous...

pride,

a sense of entitlement,

hard work to excess,

frugality turning to cheapness,

feeling wronged and wanting it righted.....

living in these ways leaves us with destructive consequences.

You see Jesus was, and we are, often tempted in the places where we have relative strength.

A poor person wouldn't be tempted to flaunt their wealth.

A very ordinary person won't be vain about their appearance.

It is in our places of relative strength where the misuse of our gifts and the abuse or manipulation can occur,

often with a pious, righteous face....a devilish face.

Boy, I get that!

The world tempts you to forget your place in the greater story of life and the faithful.

The world tempts you to question God and question your own identity.

The world tempts you to blame someone else.

The world tempts you to think there is no compassion left in this world! You're on your own!

So....do you know who you *really* are, where you are?

Are you willing to risk looking in the mirror of self-awareness?

Have you attached the meaning and purpose of your life to the "more"...as the Celtic tradition refers to God?

Do you go to the "thin" places where God is closest to you during desert, wilderness

times, the tippe-canoe times,

the times you feel overwhelmed, when you realize you're holding your breath?

When you're afraid, scared...times when the life around you seems a disaster?

Do you go to the "thin" places nearer to God when you're feeling intimidated and alone, when you can't remember who you are?

Such times are of great danger, risk...
and the greatest hope for renewal, revelation.

Jesus knows who he is.

He knows his identity is in God...his identity is not as a teacher or carpenter, a director or retiree, an engineer or a nurse, a mother or father.

Jesus' identity is within God.

His life, God's life, our life.

He draws upon God for His identity and He calls upon God, literally, for help in His tough desert times.

He calls God and He puts himself into the story of the faithful citing scripture and remembering, remembering, remembering

**He is more than He is...He is in God! A Child of Humanity.
A Soul Ascending. He is not alone. He is Divine!**

God never lets us go out into the desert days alone.
The Spirit is with us just as it was with Jesus.

In fact, at times it will indeed seem as if the spirit is leading you into some pretty unsafe, risky places. Yes.

When filled with the Spirit, you will go to unsafe places cause that's where life is lived and help is needed...

your help...your first fruits...for others...as well as for yourself.

The faithful see the unsafety of the world
and go right into the world,

knowing who they are, living within God's grace
moment to moment.

~Because much has been revealed, they risk.
~Because they risk, much is revealed! The Way through...

Jesus holds on to His identity placing Himself in the context of the story of His faith.

We are to know ourselves, call on God, and use the words of faith to protect us and give us courage.

Courage: grace under pressure.

“Help me Lord!” is a prayer!

But you have to say it. Risk saying it!

You have to say “Help me Lord!” whether it’s said from desperation,
anger,
lightheartedness,
confidence,
or fear.

And notice you are not alone...for we are all more alike than different...all holy!
All together!

In this first week of Lent,
Jesus comes to grips with his all too real human nature.

The line between goodness and evil blurs.

He becomes fully aware of Himself and aware of His faith...

it is then, through His personal revelation He can move out into the rest of His life.
Then...it doesn't feel so risky.

It is in knowing Himself that He changes the world.

Until we know who we are, we are not truly able to live our lives, change our lives or this world of ours.

We are just like Him!

**I think this morning's gospel story is an invitation
to use these 40 days,
wherever the spirit meets us or leads us,
to look at our faith,
to test our assumptions and our convictions,
to find ourselves...**

**in the story of God's people and draw strength from our past
to live bravely in the moment, creating a new future.**

How do you remember who you are when all around you
is in chaos?

When you face life's many temptations, do you do what is easy instead of what
needs to be done?

*Breathe...take a new breath...a breath of air that has been here since the
beginning of time, the same breath of air the first earthlings, Adam and Eve,
breathed,*

*Moses and the Israelites breathed,
Jesus and the disciples breathed,
Columbus and Confucius breathed,
the Native Americans and early settlers breathed,*

*George and Abraham breathed,
Father Grappe,
the person here at Tippe breathed as this church came to life in 1917...the same
breath....take a very old, new breath.*

And look up, ascend your soul.

Open your perspective, your point of view,
point of reference, lift up...

and see...the waters are full of tippe-canoes filled with deep breathers just like you.

The Way goes before us...let us begin again!

Living fully is the point.

It's not about having a vision of what will be or trying to reclaim a favored vision of the past.

The faith journey lives us into the real world,
into a new life....for your own good and for the good of all. Travel alert, remember:
Everything isn't about you!

~What do you have to do to be able to begin to begin?

All you have to do is....
connect yourself with the Holy, with one another!

And the first revelation will probably be....self-awareness!

That sounds risky! Yep!

But when do you want to live more fully?
How long are you willing to wait?

If not now, when?

Isn't the point...arrival...and traveling not just to our Jerusalems but through them to renewed life?

This is the opportune time.