

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

*“Risk and Revelation: Mind-Blowing  
Second Chances”*

Isaiah 55: 1, 3a,608, 10-12; Luke 13: 1-9;  
The Gospel of Mary 7:2-7  
March 24, 2019...Third Week of Lent

After Isaiah:

Those images...milk and wine...milk, the ordinary and extraordinary needs and provisions...at no price to you even though priceless to you...if you come. In God's generosity and the right timing, the cycle of life...all comes to fruition.

**Begin again!** God is near.

How you think about yourself, your life, is powerful!

Trust in the cycle, the journey...and you will go out in joy into your day....and led back in peace.

The mountains and hills, will for you, YOU, burst into song and the even the trees will clap as you pass by!

**OH MY!!! God loves me! YOU!  
OH MY!!**

Teaching to Gospel of Mary:

These last weeks we have been learning about Mary and her gospel. (Preparing a sheet for you.)

I remind us, she is mentioned more than any other woman in the New And in Luke,

Testament. Mary is there at the cross, dresses the body, there at the burial, is the first to see the Risen Christ.

And this is despite the culture of her time and the pressure Emperor Constantine put on the early church.

She does not write a time line of Jesus life.

Instead she offers wisdom Jesus shared with them, with her.

Remember,

She writes of the wisdom shared with her by the Risen Christ.

Her focus is on the goodness/God-ness of our humanity. We are not to cover up or avoid our frailties but rather, aware... use them toward fuller life.

In other words, knowing ourselves better, we can be more compassionate toward ourselves and so toward all others.

There is only Original Blessing!

And, she shares that Jesus says sin is an illusion. Sin, brokenness...is what happens when we betray ourselves and the fullness of our humanity.

It happens as we deceive ourselves and our true nature of goodness/God-ness.

Today she shares Jesus wisdom on the power of the mind.

Jesus wants you to think in ways that release you from faulty cause and affect assessments of life. Forcing cause and effect to circumstances misdirects our energies and thinking.

Are we...you focusing on the right stuff?

People make choices, people do die, here's the thing:  
Think...the life choices determine if we live fully or not  
and so if we die well or not!

**In the parable Jesus shares, God is the gardener  
...we are the land owners!**

And the fig trees are those people and issues and concerns we hold onto and judge in our lives...ones

Often, these "fig trees" in our lives have not been given quite enough time, care, and nurture...for anything new to happen, fruit!

We are the ones doing the cutting down....we own it!

This an invitation to think again...and give yourself and others a second chance!

That's a pretty mind-blowing really!

*"Risk and Revelation: Living Courageously"*

The way goes before us. We begin, again. We go together and yet journey alone. It will be difficult but we have the power to set our intention and go in love and know joy.

We travel to Jerusalem. Jerusalem...a place of confrontation with authorities....inner and outer authorities in our lives.

The path...

It will be risky. There will be revelations.

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In today's Lucan Wisdom Teaching the gardener in the parable asks the owner to give a second chance to this tree that has not yet produced any fruit.

God, the gardener, is asking us to give life a second chance, Give ourselves a chance to get back to our natural root...

as Mary says.

Give ourselves...a second chance.

Give a second chance to someone growing nearby.

The gardener (God) knows things are not right with the tree and that it needs a change of conditions and the right timing...*enough time*.

God is the gardener.

We are often like that owner...

grumpy for results on our terms, in our timing.

The very things that we are tempted to cut off, cut down, stump....may indeed be the very things

that can give us life...as our purposes/timing and God's... come together!

And like so many of us.....

the tree needs a change of conditions.

Doesn't your life....need a change of conditions?

This tree needs some time to more deeply take root,  
some wiggle room, some nurture and food in order to flourish...don't you?

Doesn't your spirit call out for some space so you can take root in new ways and try on some new ways of being?

...to begin again on the path that leads beyond Jerusalem?

Think...what do you need to be able to begin again?

Most often we leave places and leave people...bail...thinking we'll just find what we need somewhere else

...but here's the thing when we leave/  
cut things down or out...

the needs go with us.

The way you leave one thing is indeed the way you being the next thing...whether that's church, work, relationship.

So stay where you are planted...unless abusive, of course.

We *all* long for nurture and sustenance  
because so far life hasn't bloomed for us  
quite the way we want it to.

Don't we all want a second chance to bear fruit?

While there is no guarantee the tree will become productive, the gardener wants to do everything possible to help it.

God, it seems, has a green thumb!

God can revive what others count as dead.

Tippe Church is living, on-going proof of this!  
And, so are you!

God coaxes us to go beyond the surface level of daily life and let our roots go deep  
so we can survive the day and turn our lives around,  
so we can have abundant life.

Bloom right where we're planted!

God provides water for the thirsty,  
food that has no price,  
a worshipful work to our lives when daily work may bring no satisfaction...

*If...if you stay on the path, take a step...step out!  
....and open your mind to a new perspective.*

That's all God asks....stay on the path, again and again.

God provides....if you will come to life,  
take responsibility for the life you have and respond anew.

God wants us to feel the blessing of our already abundant growth.

Will you stay the path...not quit?

Will you make a break from your old ways? ...with help?

Do you see the need to break away? To begin again?

*Different* step for each of us...same path!

You see, we are still a lot like those who asked Jesus...  
in the first part of the wisdom teaching in Luke...  
asked why bad things happen to good people....

at some level, they must be bad....right? Or, God mean?  
But that would not be a God/good worth believing in!

We'd like to think that by being "good" we will avoid  
bad things with a good God.

And we still like to think our sins are not as bad  
as the sins of others.

So certainly this isn't about us.  
These things won't happen to us!

We'll have a different result than they did! Right...they ask?

And...we still want to blame God or someone else or  
the past for the lives we have today.

It is a way of protecting ourselves from accountability.

Jesus says in Mary we deceive ourselves and it's killing us! ...This kind of cause and  
affect kind of thinking  
actually it's more like pushing OURSELVES  
down the stairs, off the path!

Suffering and sinning do not have a one on one correlation...cause and effect. Bad stuff happens.

Trying to figure out why...is like spinning your wheels in a ditch when you could be taking a new step on the path of self-awareness, courage, with your mind open to possibility.

Everyone sins. Suffering happens.

The two are not necessarily connected. (Although, my suffering often brings me to a compassionate path.)

Therefore, no matter how good you are trying to be  
or how good things have gone for you so far,

there may be suffering...

areas that don't seem to want to grow or are cut down....

Stay The Path!

And there is a place within you that knows you too, no matter how good, have some things to turn around in your life:

repent, grow, take a step....Stay The Path!

Conversely, just because something terrible happens to you or happens somewhere else to someone else...

even if you struggle not understanding the "why",  
if you are suffering,

don't use this as an excuse to stop believing  
God cares and is present.

God's ways are not our ways.  
And God is present in ways that often may not be apparent....

working underground, beneath the feet on which you stand....in mysterious ways for  
your good.

Don't make suffering or confusion an excuse to stop believing/loving yourself and  
not do what you know you are to do:

repent, grow...step up to life,  
...belonging in your longing.

Turn your life around.  
Look at it from a new perspective.

The world may operate on a system of rewards and punishments. God does not!

God loves the sinner and God loves the goody two shoes as well...you know, that's the  
one who does all the right stuff on the outside but so often, as we know.....

inside may be *empty or broken or cursing under their breath, or manipulating for a  
certain result out of fear,  
walking their life in circles frantically. God knows...*

You see there is no hierarchy of love or sins.

Now of course, murdering someone vs telling a lie are in two different categories,

but don't let yourself off the hook too easily  
because both do damage.

It is not our place to judge the sinfulness of others, rather we are to use good judgment ourselves.

Thank God, God's ways are not our ways!  
And, we don't have to be little Gods with it all figured out.

Our work is not to figure out what we don't understand,  
but to live into what we do understand.

This is a lifetime's worth of work!

Remember,

sin is often our act of ignoring or suppressing  
the spirit within us that is telling us we are avoiding some fundamental realities....often  
for really good reasons.

We are not going to have our life really together until we sort this out....stop deceiving  
ourselves as Jesus says....

Until we face up to it and deal with it...with help

...for we belong to one of the last covenant communities whose whole intention is  
to...be...  
present to each other, help each other,  
honor God in doing so!

Our Sin (brokenness, failings, stumbling)...may mean there is unfinished business,  
or you've taken on something that is not yours,  
or you have not been fully honest with yourself or another...

and you're on that first step: self-awareness.

God calls us and gathers us on the way...calls us to repentance...to take a step into new  
life.....not to humiliate or punish us,

but so we can come closer to the kind of life we long to have. Spiraling ever close to

God!

To repent, you have to be self-aware....that first step we took together on the path.

And, to repent, we must let our hearts be courageous... that second step taken just last week.

**And now step boldly into...second chances...God given, mind-blowing second chances!**

God is whispering deep inside you,

“There is something wrong here.

Don't just keep avoiding it.

Deal with it....step right into it...I am with you.”

You know when you feel like you're failing, broken, stumbling...or are being tempted.

The Lord is near...

God is in that awareness, is that nudge within you,

so you can take courage and turn away, turn toward what has integrity and is life giving and freedom making!

Stay the path. Step into a second and new chance!

I know you know what you are called to do!

Seek the help to do it! For you do belong! You do!

*Supporting YOU! That's part of what I'm here for...and you are here for too...to help each other...*

*We travel together...we step up together in belonging as a covenant, worshipping community!*

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Jesus offers people a second chance!

He doesn't push you off the path,

undermine your step,

remove others who supports you

or put tricksters in your path!

Sometimes we're all white knuckled hanging on because the way is difficult....as we take a step, we hold each other up!



Divine-Life Giving-Presence goes with you ...with you....

Energizing your step as you take advantage of the second chances possible within you...

not because *you are so good or so bad*....

**but because God is so merciful and generous and loves you that much. You belong!**

Look over your life.

~How has God been turning over the soil to loosen your tangled roots?

~How is God watering and feeding you?

~Are you seeing or sensing any new possibilities for how life can be?

~How have the hard things that have happened to you, you know...those times when you've been covered with manure!

...how have they enriched you and turned you around?

**You did let the “hard stuff” turn you around....right?**

God is near.

God's not done with you. It's a process. A journey.

It will take you right through your Jerusalem. And beyond!

So, live with an open mind.

It is amazing how different your life looks as you walk your talk, stay on the path with self-awareness and courage embracing mind-blowing second chances...

refreshed and energized by the simplicity and clarity  
of Holy love...for you!

**~Because much has been revealed, you can risk.**

**~Because you risk, much is revealed! The Way through...**

And the way through:

The first revelation will be....self-awareness!

And the second, courageous living from the heart!

And the third, second chances...actualized grace!

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.