

“Turbulence...Along The Way”

“Tempted to...HOPE!”

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7;
The Gospel of Truth 1:1, 3;
Matthew 4:1-11

March 1, 2020 First Week of Lent

Before Readings:

Today, alongside our Gospel of Truth reading, we hear 2 temptation stories. We’ve heard them so often, we may not hear them at all. Listen again with our theme in the background of your listening and wonder where truth might reside in them...pointing us to a way through, as we turn from life’s usual temptations *toward hope...*

the Gospel of Truth’s word for us.

Invitation to the theme:

The background for our Lenten journey is the reality that turbulence happens, hard times knock on our front door.

As we have the courage to turn toward that turbulence, we are invited to go deep and look beneath its surface commotion to see what truth might be revealed through it...

one that we might not have had the courage to see or face before.

Go beneath the surface of things to discover truth.

Remember: the subject’s not the issue?

In going deeper to see the truth, we set up for ourselves that do-over and a way through the situation that we might not have been able to discern otherwise. This is often called God’s judgement.

Me as an example: Recently, I experienced a sense of betrayal that disturbed my whole peace. You?

Maybe it doesn’t take much for that to pop up in me. Moving through that “shock,” the Spirit led me into the wilderness/aloneness of that feeling AND negativity/evil/Satan tempted me to stay there but the spirit never gave up on me...kept tapping me on the shoulder, saying: Really Karen?

*So, I asked myself: What is the truth about **me** that this turbulence invites me to become aware of in a way that offers me better options than staying mad or cutting off from the persons involved.*

The first level of seeking truth brought me to the awareness, “I trust too easily.” But pretty soon, I realized that may be true but the alternative of not being trusting was not acceptable to me.

So I asked myself again: What is the truth just below this that eventually will bring me joy in better options in how respond and so be “good news”?

It came to me that I perhaps had not stayed in close enough relationship to be aware that things had changed for these others and their perceptions as well.

The invitation of that truth, was to move closer to these others (the opposite of my first reaction) and in a spirit of care...brainstorming how to move forward.

And I did and it is moving forward and I think where we are going is a far better place than we have ever been before.

Turbulence. Truth there is no way to ignore

Prompting:

In eras and places of persecution, survival can take all one's energy. Certainly those in Jesus day, and many throughout time...here in this country and elsewhere, right now, know persecution.

The need for physical safety and survival are primary.

Mindful of this harsh physical survival reality, there is a seductive modern and often subtle sense of needing to survive...

the moment, the relationship, the neighborhood, the job...
a need to survive and be safe. We, you, feel threatened.

So, you are often tempted to play it safe, even risking your own sense of integrity to find safety,

or maybe for many moderns, it's acceptance that we're seeking rather than physical safety or survival.

Perhaps your temptation is to numb yourself through all sorts of addictions from alcohol to shopping to over eating to judgmentalism to victimhood.... so you don't have to deal with *anything*. With the turbulence.

Is there another way through?

Jesus' way through was to call in help!

Not to try to make it on his own through the turbulence He experienced and the temptation to take the easy way out vs. the life-giving way through.

He kept himself centered on the story of the faith...how the people who preceded Him experienced God and found help!

Know the story, use the story, live the story's power!

YOU SEE: God is right there with you...you do have eyes to see, focus on what truth God would have you know so you don't give in to temptation.

***This is what hope is...a deep, the deepest realization God is present and things aren't what they seem to be.
There are other choices.***

Hope happens when we walk with Jesus, walk with our God into the real life, turbulent situations that are ours.

And the only way you'll see it and so come to experience the peace-trust-hope connection...is if you'll see it!

It is only a half truth that God helps those who help themselves. God partners with us and life does not give us more than we can handle in that God shows us there is a way through.

A different way.

We can act with a conscious intention to be present to the truth of the moment...even with all our temptation to bale, play it safe, ignore it.

So, where we lack awareness, ask for awareness!
Go below the surface of things. You may be moved to respond in a very different way when you do.

God can help you when you can't seem to help yourself. So...ask for Holy help, turbulence's truth, some good news...ask friends in the faith for help, too!

Jesus uses the story of his faith to know how to respond to his life. He asks for Holy help!

Whenever we are in deep aloneness/wilderness/desert times, the spirit will guide us...toward life beyond mere survival.

And we, like Matthew, know there is evil in our midst.
Matthew gives it an embodiment as a way of telling the story ...calling evil Satan or the Tempter.

Evil tempts us trying to keep from us the wisdom that comes
when we embrace the truth.

Only truth (about yourself!) can set you free.

You see, unlike the Universal power of love and life, evil
has no power to rule unless we give over our power to its use!
Don't do that!

In the turbulence you are experiencing today, remember:

You are not alone.

Remember the power of the story...your story.

Put your story alongside the Master Story of our faith.

When we are at a place of ponder, aloneness, wilderness, dryness, Spirit will guide us.

Through the Spirit, God, not the tempter, offers a life giving course of action based on deeper truths...turbulence/hardships and all.

Have you ever wondered about that phrase in the Lord's Prayer... "lead us not into temptation"?

What...a God who would do that?

Not one I'd follow!

But we know deeply that when we do follow God, we will find ourselves in situations where we will have to face turbulence and temptation...
tempted to hide, to seek comfort, to take on power over people,
to strut our stuff at the expense of others, to be greedy or self-magnanimous. (Like in today's stories.)

We know when we follow God we will find ourselves in some of the most precarious positions, even dangerous sometimes,

and we will be tempted to *back away...run away...
get out of the way!*

Jesus is on His way...on the Way...the way to live life fully...modeling for us how to be in life-giving relationship with God

and the ways in which we are invited to live out this relationship that do no harm to

others or ourselves as we maintain our dignity and integrity...even in difficult situations.

And more than this

...prompting us to help others who struggle for peace and justice on their way as well.

Do you see the spirit guiding you to face the turbulence, to enter it?

Will you allow a new possibility for the turbulence in your life to reveal something really true and new?

(Pause)

And the other temptation story today in the garden, the wisdom gifted in today's story of Adam and Eve, has often been corrupted to lay blame and shame on them...and us!

But we know their story is not one of Original Sin but rather Original Blessing...which is indeed what happened in that mythical Garden...a blessing!

Listen to this wisdom of the Garden through the insights of Rabbi Levine...a Jewish Scholar...

The word a-dam in Hebrew comes from the same root as the word humus/soil and the word humanity...it means earth...

so God created an earthling...not one guy named Adam...not a gendered creature as the English tells us.

The earthling is told to "take care of the Garden"...to work in the garden and then the land will yield to "him".

So, Eden then is not some lazy paradise but a place where effort yields results....paradise is where effort yields productivity and balance.

(Our work to do...not God's work to do!)

God says eat from any tree but the tree in the middle...the tree of knowledge of good and evil...cause eat of that tree and you will die. Is this a test?

Or, is God expecting the earthling to listen and reflect...to take "his" own life into his own hands and find within himself the courage to face life's consequences...

to powerfully live...

not puppets nor naive or a powerless being...but free and able to choose. God doesn't test or bait!

God warns! God provides a different way through the temptations and turbulence!

Warns us of the consequences of our decisions and says to us,
are you sure “that’s” worth it?

Listen, if you eat of the tree of knowledge then you will be like a God and think about how hard the choices become then...and how culpable you then become in every aspect of everything.

Want that? Ready for that?

Perhaps what God wants us to know in saying “You will die” is to let us know that if you have the responsibility of being like God, it will overwhelm and may just very well kill your spirit! Instead, focus on being a fully human!

And yet, and still, how often we are tempted to eat of that tree and play God! And it’s
death dealing.

Back to the Adam and Eve story:

God goes on to make a help-mate. God creates of the same earth a help mate...so the earthlings becomes fully alive and fully human...neither named Adam or Eve.

They were both naked and not ashamed...*and no one tells Eve the whole story about that tree!* Neither God nor Adam tells her in the story. She’s on her own...to figure out the implications.

Imagine how it might have gone if the couple had been sharing more insights and information with each other before they acted.

When the serpent...crafty, full of tempting bits of information ...beware of those *sound bites*...

asks her about what God has said...she embellishes...perhaps the world’s first theologian! She chooses to go with the snake’s words.

Now where is Adam during all this?

Right by her side, hearing it all, choosing to say nothing, easily within reach to take that apple and says nothing as he sees her take a bite knowing the consequences...*what’s his story?*

What was he thinking?

There is no tempting here on “Eve’s” part...
it was 2 adults consenting.

God acts like a truth-telling, loving parent and the children disobey. Been there?

On Wednesday we did wish God had taken a parenting class because we know what kids will do when you say don't do that! Maybe God coulda' used reverse psychology instead!

Here's the thing: Are you a bad parent when your children disobey? Are they evil when they do?

What is the blessing that comes through interacting as parent and child even in the face of poor choices and the resulting turbulence?

Parents can choose to stay alongside as children suffer through the consequences of their choices...

to be of support as they face their next choices.

God is intending to stay with them, go with them, beyond this Garden.

Even as God asks them in the Garden...where are you?

God knows where they are.

This is about them waking up to see where they are?

God ever so gently invites them to take some beginning responsibility for their choices...

staying close by to hear them and guide them.

And the word "curse" is not in the story...neither Adam nor Eve is cursed...*but both have consequences for their choices.*

They are both to labor.

...Adam in the fields for their existence and Eve labor in childbirth.

They both are to work...to produce food and children.

And God sends them...pushes them...out of the Garden and into life. BUT God goes with them...and guards the Garden that they never go back...

cause you can never go back the way from which you came...

like the Wise Ones at Jesus birth.

There is no Eden where choices and consequences do not exist.

If this is what you're hoping for, hope again!

Adam and Eve know shame as they are naked before God and each other...and the universe...feel badly about themselves as they now have to face pressures beyond the

Garden.

Where did Eden go? Paradise go? Ahh...

You find it...each time you stand in front of the person whom you care about...stand there naked of defenses, alibis, excuses...

disarmed/open/ truth-full-ly...and know no shame in being honest with yourself and them...facing truth in the turbulence...

that's Eden...that's Paradise.

That's truth. And that's no myth!

To be as present to God as God is to you...is to be open, naked, self-aware and engaged with others...seeking truth in the turbulence.

We are not asked to live as if we are not hurting...but we are asked:

How are you going to live the truth that is there,
right under the surface of our brokenness, the turbulence!

Temptation stories? I think not...God with us stories!

Powerful stories of humanity of which you are a part...Adam's, Eve's, Jesus' story...their story is our story.

We may delude ourselves thinking we are out here alone and so are tempted to give up or lose hope...

but that's exactly when truth opens us to more.

When turbulence knocks on the door of your life,
glimpse its truths and eventual gifts.

And, hear Jesus' words to you:

Peace. Be still.

Next week as part of our Lenten reflection, I will be sharing a Tippe version of the "Welcoming Prayer" as a way to make peace with the turbulence and open to discovering more.