

“Turbulence...Along The Way”

“A Daily Dose of Truth Will Save You”

Psalm 121;

The Gospel of Truth; 2:1-5, 3:4, 4:1;

John 3: 1-11, 16-17

March 8, 2020 Second Week of Lent

After Psalm 121...the psalmist trusts;
The Gospel of Truth...names it like it is;
In John 3...Nicodemus questions

Before we hear our next wisdom
teaching,

in worship on Monday night and
Wednesday morning we noted how very
much like our language use here at
Tippe
are the words of The Gospel of Truth.

Almost new agey sounding even though
they are ancient.
Listen to this...

And now listen to John but with new
ears

that are nuanced and able to resist
how this passage is often read narrowly
and often...weaponized to keep people
out.

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 truth freeing up new choices
is often called God's "judgement".

*Me as an example: Recently, I felt like
the rug was being pulled out from
underneath me through no fault of my
own. And I felt like I was solely
responsible for figuring out what to do
next...felt alone and isolated in the
turbulence.*

*Moving through that "shock," it did feel
like I was in a "mist" no one was able to
see me or truth. At first, this
misconception/transgression was
strong with me. It took a form that
pushed out all else and I felt emptied.
(Hear our scripture in this?)*

*I knew this was a false reaction.
But, this emptiness and woe is me...was
very alluring giving me permission to
wallow in "woe is me" and succumb to
the powers that be.*

Then I remembered. I know the Father/the One. There is an invitation “not to forget” what I know...and to go below the turbulence/disturbance to see what truth might await me

that indeed will bring good news of how to be in the midst of what was going on. Actualized hope.

And, I shared with a few trusted others. They heard me. Shared it was not mine to do on my own.

And encouraged me to go directly to the ones who could help the situation, to confront with the intention of doing no harm.

That nudge of truth opened up doors of connection, light streaming through the windows of the house of disturbance.

The invitation of that truth, was to move closer to others (the opposite of my first reaction) and in a spirit of care... call in the resources right before me and move forward.

Turbulence. Truth there is no way to ignore

Prompting:

The psalmist trusts.
Nicodemus questions.
Jesus invites...

invites us into the miraculous story
of who we *really* are...born to be! ...*again!*

For God so loved the world, God gave God’s only child, that all may be saved through him.

Actually, the point is in the next verse,
the point I think Jesus would have us remember
rather than this most often quoted verse.

Listen to Jesus...

Indeed, God did not send Me into the world
to condemn the world, **to catch you being bad,**
to blame you or shame you,
certainly not to punish you...
that's not why God sent me!

But that you might be saved.

God sent Me in order that the world might be saved
through Me...

I am the way, the lens through which God would have you look at your life...

to help you see the choices more clearly,
see consequences more dearly...

**before the disturbance gets the best of you and you lose sight of the truth
being offered;**

to give you courage to stop what you are doing,

**stop doing what is not working for you...
so you can save your spectacular self...
most often...from yourself!**

How?

Jesus never set himself up to be worshipped as an icon or as a God! So worshipping
Jesus isn't it.

It's NOT about right belief!

Instead Jesus offers His life as a living example in a tough world...a way we too can
live

new lives right through the turbulence
when it knocks on our front door.

The ways of Jesus nudge us not to forget God is with us always...to support us to resist
being seduced

by materiality and emptiness and woe is me...
and so then transgress.

Hurting ourselves.

Living the way Jesus lives is the Way
to be in the turbulence and find
the path of truth....that will save you!

Even if you'd rather face it, not know it...at first.

Jesus shows you ways to live with integrity and joy
a meaning-centered life that matters every day.

Beyond what can be seen, live in the reality-defying
presence of the One who loves you.
Live in the spirit of graced do-overs.
Be saved in this way!

**With Jesus as your lens for looking at the day...it's like a breath of fresh
air...spirit born!**

Born again, you can breathe again and see again
and be again.

A chance to discover the deeper truth of things!

And, here's the amazing thing about Nicodemus:

...something in him pushed him to go and keep asking his questions, to keep muttering
to Jesus the question:

"How is this possible?"

I think what he really was asking is...

how is it possible for me to believe in what I cannot understand or see, even if I really
want to?

How is it possible my life can ever be different?

~This is what Jesus responds to next in the story.

And, well, actually, it isn't possible...life is impossible...to understand, to change...
when...

you go it on your own and believe only in the surface version of the turbulence you're
experiencing...

and won't imagine there is a truth just below
that will feel like release, eventual good news...
bring a way through and give you hope.

Impossible...unless...you believe without seeing
(which takes you beyond a set of right ways of thinking to living life as a daily spiritual
practicum.)

Believe in the power of our "Impossible, Amazing God"
whose love continually defies what is known,
what is possible by worldly standards.

...a God whose love of each one of us
is formidable and can transform a "no-way-Jose"
kind of thinking

into a powerful new way of truth,
seeing other possibilities.

When we can believe in ourselves as God believes in us,
we can begin to claim a new life...with God's help.

While *we may* not be a constant
in showing up in our own lives...to the truth of things just below the surface of things,

God shows up and is constantly nudging us
to remember and save ourselves...from our selves.

*But it is easier to believe in microwaves and
cyber attacks and fake news

than it is to believe in God's presence with us as made known to us through
Jesus.....*at least*.....at first.

Remember, in the ancient days, the use of the word believe was more akin to how we
use the word believe today.

When Jesus invites us to believe, it was not a set of ideas, but a way of being open in the
world, held within God's love for us just the way things are...
as disturbing and misty as things seem!

Ahhh then...Believing, it's like a breath of fresh air...

a process of breathing in possibility and hope...
and exhaling of falseness and pride and mistakes...

Being released from that critical inner voice.

Believing not in ideas...but living more like Jesus said...born from above...actually
another valid translation for these words is "Born anew"!

Born anew over and over again as we grow up anew in God's grace.

Not born again, once!

Born anew over and over again...

in spirit, in action, within community.

Faithing our lives.

You know, just maybe Jesus was Presbyterian!

We Presbyterians claim as one of our core guiding principles “reformed and reforming”

**...not born again...but continuously born anew,
re-forming ourselves in light of new truth,
a perpetual process of continual reshaping.**

One Monday night 3 years ago, Brad said it this way,
“You can start your day over any time you want.”

Born anew.....Nicodemus was struggling.

He knew the stories about Jesus were true,
but they were just so incredibly hard to believe...imagine how hard! To risk believing
in!

That would change everything...it's no wonder he struggled ...we struggle!

What a brave human being Nicodemus was...

**to ask his questions...of the person who could answer them...even if he was
afraid and felt he could only come to ask under the cover of darkness...privacy!**

Perhaps it was Psalm 121 which he would have known well that sustained him in
courage. He looked up!

Got a bigger perspective... a less anxious perspective.

He went out (of his thought world) so he could come back in...within God's keeping.

He asked. In asking, questioning, doubting,

he began for himself an amazing journey to wholeness and life...for even though this
story ends with him being confused at best, it is not the end of his story.

Nicodemus shows up two more times in John's gospel.

He comes to Jesus' defense later in the story...

4 chapters later...

as the Pharisees begin to plot to be rid of Jesus.

By the way, the Pharisees let him know that if he defended Jesus, he is suspect as well.

That's a threat!

Sound familiar?

But he stays on the Way and comes to a place of truth within himself...as he goes with

Joseph of Arimathea to prepare Jesus' body after his crucifixion.

It's a process for Nicodemus...coming into the light...seeing clearly...saving himself through a deeper truth that lies just below the surface of his original questions and thinking!

His personal miracle changes everyone's possibilities.
It works like that...yes, it does!
Your choices affect others powerfully!

Born again? Na...

I think it would be better said:

**Saved again...and again! From ourselves.
It's a process. Do-overs daily!**

It's not an easy process to look at yourself and your motivations, your fears and doubts, your choices...through the turbulence...

to look for the deeper truth to the ways of Jesus to see how to live life differently and breathe new life into your life...

It takes...trust....trust God keeps you...

no matter where you are in your process or what the truth.

Brad said, "If you're sleeping by the edge of a cliff, pray and roll away from the edge!"

You can trust that God keeps

...God keeps you. God's got cha'.

God is as close as your right hand to provide shade from the scorching life can bring...

step into it...

cool off! Cool down. Think!

God will keep you from all evil...mind you that doesn't say keep all evil from you or that you won't place yourself in evil's way,

believers/belovers often find themselves in harm's way for you seek truth. And evil doesn't like the truth!

God is with you in your going out and your coming in.

In the face of doubt, turbulence, daily life...
from where does your help come?

Well, it doesn't come from the
TV screen,

the newspapers,

the gossip mill,

complaints,

bickering,

books,

gurus,

trying to be on the winning side rather than
the losing side...

Your help comes from.....God in YOU!

Like the wind, the spirit comes into our lives.
It is unseen, but its effects very much felt.

It blows where it will,
where we wish it wouldn't blow sometimes.
The spirit blows into the very hard and dark places
of our lives.

It is the "night" of our belief with a new day about to "dawn" in our faith.....every day a
new dawn.

“Let whoever seeks not cease from seeking until they find. When you know yourselves,
you will be known, and you will know you are children of the living God. But if you do
not know yourselves, you live in poverty and you yourselves are the poverty...”

Gospel of Thomas

Sounds like the wisdom of the Gospel of Truth!

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!

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

And, hear Jesus' words to you:
Peace. Be still.