

“Turbulence...Along The Way”

*“Water Wisdom: Be Concerned
with...YOURSELF!”*

Exodus 17: 1-7;

The Gospel of Truth 18:1-11;

John 4: 5-34

March 15, 2020 Third Week of Lent

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:

So turbulence this week...remembering not all turbulence is “negative,” came to me as my son shared he and his wife/family were successful in selling their home looking to buy one a bit bigger for their family size now. Yahoo! But, no place to go yet...haven't found that new home and time is a ticking to be ready to move out. Darn! I love looking online for houses (have moved over 13 times in my life) and it's fun looking when the stress isn't yours own!

And, I opened up the local realtor app and started. About 5 minutes, in I could feel my body tensing (my stomach...remember our body often signals us something is up...part of how God gets our attention!) And I said to myself...what are you doing? Living vicariously through my kids. Stop!

That was the first level of truth. But I have to tell you, after we did a spiritual practice at close of worship on Monday, I realized there was a deeper truth. Nick doesn't need me...not in this way! He wants me and that's even more wonderful. I am free...this truth feels freeing and affirming...it is the good news!

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

Thank God for Turbulence. Truth there is no way to ignore

Prompting:

Rocks that gush water.

Water that becomes a spring of water within.

Water that quenches more than thirst, food that sustains more than mere bread alone. Jesus is inviting us to go to a deeper meaning, insights. The truth below the turbulence!

So...got rocks?

Spirit and truth?

In today's stories, God offers fullness of life in unconventional ways to people who are facing scarcity, suffering, and exclusion.

Living Waters!

We are invited to ask ourselves what is really life-giving and look to the unconventional sources around us

God is providing for our lives today...

and commit to "drinking" from those sources while standing on the rock of our faith!

Yep...life is a process. We travel in stages.

So many challenges...for the Samaritan woman, so many husbands dismissed or abandoned her...

bounced all over, feeling little control, ending alone and desperate and relying on someone outside her family to care for her...

shunned, going to the well alone in the midday heat...get the picture?

Been there...in those turbulent times?

....What a mom!

Three preschoolers of her own to love and manage! A constant flow of their friends and hers going in and out of their day.

Dad works long hours. So, except for weekends, she often is the only parent the kids see from rising till bedtime.

And there are times when the play and noise and chores seem more than she can handle. I mean nothing is really wrong...but at times it is more than she can deal with. She can feel the "stress" building within her as she approaches that time of day when no matter what else is going on, the kids seem to get a little wilder...dinner time.

And she just can't hear one more question, one more whine, one more loud voice (even laughter!), one more crashing of toys. ...**And Jesus sits alone at the well.**

Another day, another dollar to earn, another 15-minute break at last! It is fun as they all gather around the vending machines.

They look forward to the teasing and laughter and a 15-minute change of pace. And the jokes! What jokes!

Funny though, those jokes often center on put-downs...jokes at the expense of Blacks, Jews, Poles, Italians, women, blondes, lawyers, old people, gay people.

Oh those jokes. And you just laughed.

You often laugh even if you are one of these targeted in the joke. I mean they usually are funny, right? Anyways, it is just a joke. ...**Jesus sits at the well.**

They are meeting to figure out just how they can maintain all the ministries they have going on...

so many expect so much from so few and so little...

it can be frustrating at times. They are all volunteers and everyone has busy lives.

It just seems there's so much to do.

Maybe they are doing too much. Maybe people are *expecting* too much...focusing more on what the church can do for *them* than what *they* as church can do for *others*.

Maybe our commitment is strained in that community needs/common good now is superseded by any one's own perceptions, wants, emptiness.

And yet, the ministry is touching the lives of the people with support and meaning and often laughter and/or tears.

So, what shall they do?

So much to consider and so much possibility. Can they find a way to make it all work? ...**Jesus is at the well.**

He has come to a time in his life when nothing seems to be going right. Doors seem to be closing in his face left and right.

No one seems to care about what he cares about...at work or at home. He almost feels invisible...worse than that, he feels ignored and unimportant.

He feels hopeless that he could ever change things. He feels alone.

It is hard to get anyone to hear how he is really feeling about things, let alone do anything differently!

Why don't we work together? Why can't we talk together without someone blowing up and leaving the room?

Why can't our family be like other families?
What's going on here? ... **Jesus is at the well.**

The well. The place of possibility for life.

A place set outside the city walls of everyday life in the dry, desert surroundings.

A place where you can go to draw water.

A place where Jesus went when he himself was tired out and needed rest and water.

And the Samaritan woman comes.

You heard the story. I wonder what happened next in her life.

Did she sip of the living waters Jesus offered...waters that reflect back to her/us the truer picture of choices and the clearer picture of a new future?

Did she have faith enough to begin to treat herself differently...as God would have her be treated?

To treat life's options differently?

Does she ultimately get it? ...that Jesus loves her...YOU!

The Living Waters?

Have trust in God, through Jesus,
be confident to know yourself, your faith,

don't blame others,
take the long view of things
and move your life forward with God's help.
Her process at the well?

Well, it's a lot like our process.

For we have many dry places in our lives, too.
We are at risk and vulnerable in our culture, too...
a culture which almost seems to be setting booby traps
for us to fall into.

We too marry over and over again, that is we search outside ourselves for the answers
to life's problems,

or we blame outside ourselves for life's problems.

We focus on everyone but ourselves.

We eat our own vomit, let ourselves be rotten.
Build up the very barriers we are trying to tear down...
when intimidated, unsure and act lawlessly on our own.

Funny...in God, there is no blame, no shame.

We are willing to try almost anything, except standing on that rock, as we seek the solution to what's wrong in our lives...

thinking if we can get the right husband or wife,
get enough water,
read the right book,
take the right course,
join the right church,
buy the right car or clothes,
the emptiness will get filled.

We live in unsafe emotional times and though not many of us are threatened by strangers and starvation,

we are all threatened by stereotypes,
off color humor,
stressed out lives,
possessiveness and materialism,
emotional burnout,

a culture that would have us blame others rather than look to ourselves or actively solve our own dilemmas with integrity and forthrightness...

a culture not built on rocks, but sand...
not built on hope but helplessness.

As the Gospel of Truth says:

We second guess ourselves...aren't concerned about ourselves the same way we are concerned about what others may think. We "eat our vomit", we go "rotten" on ourselves and become worms living on a decaying life. The very things we dismantle to help ourselves, we strengthen as barriers when we self-doubt. We go in alone vs with others.

How often we think the answers lie outside of ourselves when Jesus would have us know what we really seek is already within each one of...within...

a well of new life energy and perspectives...
a well lies beneath the rock of faith
on which you have come to stand...

if you will only drink of our faith and live into its hope...

stay the course without making assumptions...blaming,

live into faith's long view in getting through life's challenges...

it's a process...

happens in stages.

Ah, yes.

We know that woman...that woman at the well.

We are she. But are we?

In the dry places of your life, where Jesus sits at the well awaiting you, do you see Him there as she did?

Would you hear His words for you?

Would you acknowledge what He knows about you...the truth below the surface of things, loving you still?

Would you sip from the well of possibilities He is creating for you?

Would you?

Drinking in new possibilities is a process of watering, not just one quick sip...a process of inner-transformation and outward courage.

Like the people in Exodus, we travel in stages through the wilderness...one step at time, one encampment,

one sip of water at a time...

each sip growing our faith...faith: the essential of life.

We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations.

Like that woman at the well, we too have the choice to act...to harvest immediately for all is ripe...that the time is now!

Not later, in four months, when expected,

when we get where think we ought to be,

when the star align,

when the authorities have vanquished,

when resistance is less,

when our finances are better,

when our family life is easier,

when we have more members,
when we have better leaders or teachers or managers...
now!

When the dry places of your life wear you out, drain you dry, frustrate you no end.

When you feel out of control, things seem to hold little hope, that is exactly when you'll find him...

Jesus sitting there. Jesus loves you.

For a second, if it is comfortable to you...close your eyes.

Friends, Jesus is just ahead of you now, sitting at the well in the dry place of your life, in the turbulence.

See the well? See Him?
Will you approach Him?

He needs your help with the waters...
it is you who has the bucket!

Can you hear His voice offering you living waters....offering it to you now, just in time?

The well is deep.

What are the living waters you ask Jesus to pour out for you this morning?

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.