

Day 2

“You Can’t Skip Day Two! What Was I Thinking?!”

Inspirations of Brene Brown, thingsilearnt
(wordpress.com), Dr. Mulkar
Exodus 17:1-7; Matthew 21:23-32
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Theme:

Within our shared worshipful times together at Tippe over many years, we have often spoken about the power of the stories we tell ourselves to be either life-giving or life-stopping.

Tell the story (of your day, a part of your life) to yourself in a different way, with a different intent or focus, you change how it shapes the meanings you make. Different narrative, different meaning.

Our lives have many stories running through them concurrently: daily lives and long-term intentions, our projects and goals, relationships with different people.

And each story has a process or a storyline: a beginning, a middle, and an end. So, three acts: a Day One, Day Two, Day Three.

Day 1 is the start...the “what?” and a deep realization, with deep emotions or lack of, a reckoning, of sorts, with the way things really are.

Day 2 is the struggle...how to respond/move forward. It asks of us our vulnerability to honestly acknowledge what is happening, curious about new questions and learnings. Wrestling with and ruminating on ideas and strategies, recognizing misunderstandings, faulty assumptions, projections...and owning them as a way of freeing yourself to new insights. We call this courage!

Day 3 is the resolution...the new way, a new and maybe unexpected ending that makes much meaning...brings meaning to life. It creates a little revolution in your life...as you rally, recover, and reach out.

And, Day 2 is always the hardest.

The “what to do now” is hard and often leaves you feeling exposed, perhaps overwhelmed...and often tired!

Reminds me a bit of Advent.

It’s also ‘the point of no return’ - a term borrowed from aviation. You’re too far to turn back, but not yet far enough...to see the light, a new ending to your story, and your struggle.

Day 2 is a scary place at times. You just don’t know what will come next but you do know...it is coming (you can’t turn back...the clock) and you have a say in what will come next. The way you tell yourself this story matters!

Thing is:

You can’t skip day 2!

Day 2 is the non-negotiable part of the process - when things are raw, and real, emotions are high. This is when the struggle seems too real and too large. Life is a rumble. Sound familiar? The gut-wrenching, never-ending feeling of everything going wrong is Day 2.

But the only way to Day 3 is through Day 2. Because...

you cannot resolve the challenge till you
deeply FEEL the need to resolve it –
REALLY FEEL THE NEED for it to be different
in your bones, unleashing your true potential.

(Like angst of running up against a deadline you've avoided through procrastination can prompt your best work ...pushing you to stretch. Or, how often someone struggling in addiction must hit the bottom before they come back up.

Like when you're backed up against a wall.)

It takes courage to stay in Day 2.

Courage to be vulnerable in exploring the situation and options.

You have to choose courage over comfort (which may be cozy at first but sits you on the couch as an on-looker in your own life story as if powerless).

And, no amount of awareness or experience
can give you a free pass from the daunting level of doubt
which is part of the process of Day 2.

But what awareness and experience **will** give you is:
a little grace. A grace that whispers:

“This is part of the process. Stay the course. You've done this before. I am with you.
Together, we've got this!”

It's messy...and it's normal.

It's okay.

It's where the magic happens. Mystery unfolds.

Holiness thrives within.

So: stay the course.

In this Covid/protest/politic season, most of us have been in Day 1 a while now...and are being pushed, no return now, into Day 2.

The way you navigate Day 2 will define the possible new outcome and peace of your story: Day 3.

The way you tell yourself your story, matters.

~Before Exodus:

The Jewish people struggled to find the Promised Land, their Day 3. They were stuck in Day 1 filled with feeling and frustration. Complaining and arguing. To be clear, they were exhausted and didn't even have their basic needs met.

Moses enters Day 2 as he expresses his emotion **and then opens up to exploring** another way of resolving the issue. He is willing to be vulnerable to what might seem foolish to some: standing on a rock and tapping it with his staff.

~Before Matthew:

In our Gospel Wisdom Teaching, Jesus shares a parable. This is not a metaphor like many other parables, but an allegory.

It doesn't point to something bigger than itself (like a metaphor does).

Instead it does a 1 to 1 comparison/correlation between choices and consequences...keeping it simple so you can understand, sweetheart!

Listen to how the scribes, father, sons were all in different Days. What's going on here? Where are you?

Prompting:

What on earth were they thinking?

Why did they ever let Moses talk them into leaving?

At least in Egypt they knew what to expect each day, even if it was a life of hardship.

Before, their lives *had been totally controlled* by the Egyptians. They didn't have to think for themselves really, just do what they were told.

(Secretly, many of us wish for this as if it would make things simpler! And we accomplish it by telling ourselves the same old stories over and over again even if they lead us nowhere.)

Now, there were so many decisions to make.

Maybe this new freedom was more than they bargained for, than they could handle.

It certainly wasn't what they dreamed it would be. Day 1.

But there was no turning back.

They had to reckon with the way things were now.

They had to become vulnerable to trusting all over again, because they were living a new story...not able to tell themselves the same old story over and over again.

They now had to learn to trust themselves...trust...in self...*was a real issue*. Still is...what were they thinking!

So...what on earth were we thinking?

Why did we ever let...Karen, the session, those other churches, talk us into leaving “the way we were” behind? Think we could be the new church/write a new story!

Before we pivoted DI and ASLC, pre-COVID when the budget was balanced more easily,

when there were fewer programs, less mission,
a practiced involvement in the greater community,
we knew what to expect.

Before, our lives had been totally controlled by...

low expectations. Much easier!

We didn't really have to think for ourselves,
just do what we had always done,

Live the past story over and over again...
asking no new questions of the present or ourselves!

Now, there are so many decisions to make.
Are we/am I ready to reckon with that?

Maybe this new freedom and possibility is more than we bargained for, than we can handle.

It certainly is a lot harder to be a new church than it was to be the old church.

It isn't the way we dreamed it would be. But there's no turning back. We have to learn to trust all over again.

What on earth were you thinking?

Why did you ever let your spouse, your boss, your friend, your faith, **this Covid, these protests, this politic, that destruction...**

talk you into leaving what you had... "behind"
in search of the something other or more?

Can you reckon with being a new you!
You have to learn to trust yourself all over again!

It's so easy to struggle, to lose our way,
physically and spiritually
when we find ourselves in a challenging environment where new thinking is needed to survive and flourish.

As followers of God today, we often find ourselves between a rock and a hard place.
The "rock" of our own expectations of what life *should be* like,

and the "hard place" of the situation in which we find ourselves...

Day 1:

**a hard, emotional place often defined
by the limitations
of our own imaginations and curiosity.**

In such times of our lives, we may wonder...like they did, if God is really with us or not...

even though the Red Sea parts,
manna is served, and water appears.

We easily forget we have made it to Day 3 before! But, how quickly we forget and how easily we doubt and complain!

We often go back into our old stories of blame and shame and codependency convincing ourselves we are powerless.

The Gospel reading today...

invites us to look within ourselves and give ourselves another option for a new story to unfold:

To move beyond our first reactions and revisit our options...

To even change our mind!

This story is not about the authority of the father.

The parable is about the sons and their choices in how to live their stories forward.

Their reckoning with what life...their father, asks of them (their yes or no reaction) and very importantly, then reckoning with the choice they first made, and so, choosing again.

“Reckoning” - is the process where we assess where we find ourselves and what we are feeling. It isn't a simple process.

Recognizing our emotionality allows us to become aware of how we are thinking...often faulty thinking – acknowledge the story we are telling ourselves – how we may be projecting our stories on others... often engaging in subtle (or not!) blaming and shaming.

Often judgmental of others with a sense of self-justification choosing to stay stuck...in Day 1. No wonder we're so tired!

We don't like to feel difficult emotions, and we often don't know what to do with discomfort and vulnerability.

Our instinct tells us to run from pain.

But a part of us does want to confront what's happening and engage our emotions. This **is** part of our humanity...at least as children. Children don't filter their feelings and are naturally curious no matter what they are feeling.

Like children, will we be curious when emotions are high? Curious about what motivates us...not just on the surface of things but deeply motivates us?

Curiosity naturally leads us to a form of problem solving. Curiosity leads us to question and learn.

So, will we feel our feelings and then engage our own vulnerability in not knowing, and be courageous enough to want to find out?

In today's Gospel:

The sons are each challenged to do what they don't want to do. Each conflicted in the moment.

They need to "reckon" with the new task, new situation and all the feelings they are feeling about the ask. Day 1.

They are being challenged to accept their own power to make their own choices...to recognize their own authority in what will come next.

The story they tell themselves about themselves and the situation determines what comes next. Day 2.

The father has not threatened, begged, or cajoled his boys. (Just as God did not threaten and punish those in the desert who grumbled.)

The father gave them a chance to make up their own minds and, then gave them the opportunity to change their minds after thinking about it...

because in the end, it is **not** what we say **but** we do
that has weight...that counts...
that shows what we
really believe and desire from life.

We can make a choice, then change course, and
live a different storyline.

Grace...second chances...do-overs are possible.

God graciously whispers in your ear:

You're in process, stay the course,
it's ok to change your mind, I am with you, you've got this!

When you embrace the confusion and emotionality of Day 1, reckoning with yourself...

when curiosity and honesty bring you to explore possibilities...when you self-examine
and ask new questions of yourself and the situation,
blame of self and others drops away.

And so then...

**your spirit can handle the consequences
of your choices
...both the good and the challenging consequences.
Day 2.**

And your Day 3 becomes possible. A new resolution arises that might even surprise...you!

It may be as silly as tapping a staff on a rock or take you where you never thought you would go, and partners you with folks you never imagined you'd want to know.

So...let's say you freely made a choice...

like change a job, have another child,
take on a tough project, increase your giving,
let go of old anger,
seek a new spirit....

let's say you freely make a choice...

and you find yourself in Day 1 of the wilderness trying to reckon with where you find yourself...feelings and all...

wondering

where on earth is God and *what* on earth was God thinking...

to encourage me to take this leap of life and faith...

what do you do then?

Here's where the wisdom of our Exodus passage circles back to help us further...you wrestle and rumble...as Moses does.

**You own the situation for what it is without all those faulty assumptions
that often bring blame and shame/whining and complaining...
which are life stopping, dead ends in the storyline.**

Massa and Meribah...Moses names the place where they were: test and quarrel. Day 1.

...so they can figure out what is deeply happening (a justifiable fear) and how their high emotions bring judgement and blame. Only then can they accept their situation and their power in it. And explore other options. Silly ones even!

Naming the situation/the "What..." is powerful!

Noticing how far you've come already and the unconventional resources at hand...powerful.

~ ~ ~

Do we see how far we've come...since last March?
Are we naming our situation without judgement and blame?
Are we willing to be curious? ...to change our minds?
Are we willing to be vulnerable to explore a new ending?

We don't have to let the old story we've been telling ourselves seduce us into thinking
nothing has changed,
life won't change,
there is no hope.

We can, instead, tell ourselves a new story, embracing new possibilities for a new reality.

In the Exodus story, they chose to make camp where there was no water.

Sometimes we chose to camp
where there is no water for us either.

Do we tell ourselves a story of growing anxiety and bitterness? Is that where you camp
out?

But we can change our mind about that!

There is no easy way to the Promised Land of Day 3...darn!
You have to reckon and rumble, and live Day 2 first.

We have the power to choose where we camp,
how we name where we have come from
and importantly, *explore new options,*
and change how we tell ourselves the story!

Again...

What is the story you are right now telling yourself about your situation...emotions and all?

What in the story are you willing to own?

Will you move your story from Day 1...reckoning with your feelings and engaging your curiosity about what can come?

Will you move your story to Day 2? And stay there with courage and vulnerability to give peace and Day 3 a chance?

The notion of unexpected water from “a rock”,
calls me to wonder about the abundant resources that may right now be hidden from
awareness...

not by God
but by dependency on the old stories we have told ourselves.

We can tap into unmeasured resiliency and ability
to deal with what is
and live into what can be,
despite what has been!

God knows how hard it is to be human being
and gives more
than one chance to live a life that works!
Not to be right but to get it right!

The priests and elders thought they were between a rock and a hard place, and so, play
a game. Same old, same old.

Jesus' story invites us to revisit our usual ways of thinking and give ourselves
permission to change...
choose a new story and a new Day!

We are invited to live Day 2 and take the consequences
rather than waste time trying to find what is the impossible:
a solution that has no consequences!

I can change my mind about myself.
I can change my life
and what it means to be a new being, human.

Will you open the storyline...be curious, vulnerable, courageous? Are you willing to
look at things differently?

When you change the way you look at things,
the things you look at...change!
Just like that: 1, 2, 3!