

Welcome What's Next...

"Foolish Wisdom"

John 2: 13-22; 1 Corinthians 1: 18-25; Psalm 25:  
1, 4-5, 9-10

March 4, 2018 Third Sunday of Lent

John...this story is found in all 4 gospels which means it's likely good to be historically true is high. However, in all other versions, Jesus' focus is on building the understanding that the temple is a place of prayer and relationship. This story comes nearer Palm Sunday in these gospels...sorta a last ditch effort to get the religious to do things differently.

In John only does he use the resurrection as a metaphor...and it is likely because John has the most "story" about the resurrection and so early on this sets up his ending.

For us the resurrection is primarily a call to deeply know that love and justice cannot be stopped...ever. What is right within you will outlast the world's wrongs. There is big debate about an actual resurrection or not...but it side tracks rather than focuses on the message of God through Jesus.

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In Corinthians, remember that the cross is a symbol of encouragement and freedom, not oppression, shame, guilt. Jesus isn't up there! And here is a story that captures the Sophia tradition and the ancient knowing that Jesus is an incarnation of the wisdom aspect of God present before time and continuously, to show us the way to live.

So we have been noticing the resiliency of our God (not a humanoid, we know that!) and our Christ these first weeks of Lent...how they dynamically were open to change even as they faced very challenging situations. Given the

whole of their past relationship with humanity and their trust in new possibilities, they were able to face and move into each new encounter. They were able to welcome what's next because they knew there was more to the story and they would never give up on any of us.

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When you hear the word, resilience, what comes to mind?

And you already are...you're here, right?

The faithing journey is about being self-aware and using our strengths/our courage, the resiliency responses we already have as we seek a peace filled life

...even on the way to our own Jerusalems.

We go with what works and let go of what doesn't.

And, we're willing to keep learning a few new things along the way....knowing we are to survive, yes...

But we are to do so...bringing everyone else with us along the way...to seek right relationship, inclusive of all.

The entire Jesus story is about taking responsibility to look deeply within, into our hearts, our minds and our motivations.

The stories challenge us to ask: **How resilient am I?**

**And as we hear today's wisdom teachings...**

As we move through this economy and the emerging culture that surrounds it, so much seems changed...not necessarily all for the better.

The one thing that remains the same in my estimation:  
the number of conversations I hear where people are discouraged while working hard,  
often stuffing or expressing their anger.

We are indeed often an angry group of silent people!

**Here's the thing....**

We feel the way we do for really good reasons.  
Real loss. Real grief. Confusion. Sadness.  
Our sadness turns inward as depression/discouragement....  
or outward, as anger.

We can take the insights of the anger and use them for *good*  
as we take the energy that anger releases and use it for *good!*  
Stop stuffing it and stop taking it!

You see, we are in that marketplace...of the temple,  
of the world, of our homes....  
where real life intersects truth and loving.

Will we stand back and gawk at the angry people while stuffing our own anger...quietly submitting?

Will we, like those money changes and priests in the temple, use and abuse others in their innocence?  
...because...we can!

Others...who are trying their best to play by the rules that are stacked against them.  
Buying those pure sacrificial animals when no sacrifice is even called for?  
Are we angry...shouldn't we be!?

Anger is a secondary emotion...  
like guilt, denial...

Beneath our anger, there's a very important primary feeling  
that is not being paid attention and so in frustration,  
may explode us into anger.

Most often, unawares, we act out these primary, stuffed feelings.

And gee, sometimes, it seems we just don't get heard  
until we do get angry....they don't get it till we're mad!

And even then,  
our real needs won't be known and so met  
**unless we name them....**  
or unless the other person is *clairvoyant*.

So, when was the last time you were angry?

What feeling was just beneath it....  
what was the need that was not getting met?

Did anybody but you know?

In last week's lesson, Peter was in denial about his fear of being left alone and so, angrily, rebukes Jesus.

And so Jesus got angry with him, -- "Get thee behind me, Denial....Peter, deal with your fear and take a look at the bigger picture."

Jesus helped him know what was beneath his anger.

And today Jesus goes beyond the personal to the corporate.

Jesus got mad because the people missed the point,  
didn't see the bigger picture or maybe got lost in it!

They were in denial about the way things are and their role in the perpetuation of it.  
They cared about their own gains at the expense of others.

So, God in Jesus gets angry because God hurts for the people. And isn't going to stuff it any longer!

You see,  
the *point* of religion is not religion...it's God.

And the *point* of God is not religion....it's you!

The point is right relationship! With all, all the time!

So, because the temple system, despite all its wisdom,  
was missing the point, Jesus gets angry.

This story is commonly called "The Cleansing of the Temple"....but Jesus is not mopping the floors with Pinesol.

He is turning the tables over. Getting totally ticked.

It wasn't that he was shocked about the moneychangers in the temple;

he'd been to Jerusalem and the temple several time before.

It wasn't that he didn't care about Jewish traditions...it was exactly because he **did** care that he was so upset!

Jesus saw the Law of God getting lost in the shuffle....  
God's guidance given to help us, corrupted.

God's invites us to live  
emotionally honest lives in the service of Divine inclusion.

Jesus saw God's laws and guidance for well-being  
had been reduced  
to common rules and regulations.

**So what was supposed to foster a right relationship between God and humanity,  
had become just another means of exploitation....**

corrupting us monetarily--yes....  
but more importantly--side-tracking us **spiritually.**

They were...*we are*...missing the point.

**So often bent on doing it right,  
we're getting it wrong....**

we've forgotten what the "it" is that we're trying to do....

and so even with the best of intentions,  
we lose our oneness perspective,

we don't put our hand in the hand of God, we don't bridge our "I Am" with the great "I Am"....

reducing GOD to be *nothing more than*  
**a byproduct of church life**  
**rather than the point of our life together...**

This is the point Jesus is making in the temple.

Jesus was upset...angry...because what started out with the best of intentions  
*now*  
had become a hindrance to the poor, the needy, to YOU and those who seek Holiness.

The rules were in the way....not God's rules...

but the unspoken or temple rules (then: the right sacrificial animals bought with the right  
money...today: stuff like what's acceptable to wear, to say, where to sit, who is welcome.)

Zeal for worshipping in the right ways had gotten in the way of the true meaning of "worship/temple".

We think, here at Tippe, we're doing good the way we've set up our worship....and largely this is so...

but we, too, may not see our hidden faults....playing out right here....setting others up to fail or  
excluding some!

We don't see how within our very selves we have set up so many rules (pulled aside by so many  
dictators within)

*that we don't have* a chance to be free to be!

We don't like messes...rubble....anywhere in our lives...not just in our church.

**We want there to be an orderly way to get things done....and we mean: our way,  
and the way sometimes becomes more important than the thing we're trying to  
accomplish.**

Jesus sure makes a point!

OK. Let yourself get a picture of him in your holy imagination upsetting tables, dispersing animals, yelling.

What might you see/hear from those who were gathered there as they watched this "crazy prophet" at work? Those coming to worship, the sellers, the priests.

In the background,

if you really listen,

you can hear God crying that even in our greatest human wisdom we are often so foolish.

In Jesus' foolish actions there is so much wisdom...  
will they get it?

Did Jesus' righteous anger make a difference?  
Or was it only foolishness?  
Wasted energy?

Did anyone there that day get it?

Do we get it?

What difference can it really make if  
You make one profound gesture?

We can't change *the world* that way...can we?  
It will take too long!

We can't change *ourselves* that way...can we...  
one thing at a time by being emotionally honest?  
It will be too hard!

What difference could doing "one thing"...  
even one righteous, foolish thing....really make?

**Each time we say no to injustice,  
each time we stand up against corruption.....**

**each time we let ourselves feel our real feelings and do something about them, be  
resilient...**

**the world changes.**

Proof? *The world's resistance to your resilience!*

Proof? *Look around you at these fellow travelers along the way.*

The primary reason the temple, the church exists:

**....to give people courage to look foolish  
in the eyes of the culture**

**and thank God with every *look* we get.**

We can offer no signs. No logic.

We can offer you enough love and support to “be” different...  
to be a walking, talking temple...  
holy of holies within you.

Jesus is telling us we are each the place/the temple in which God dwells.

This may mean upsetting things a bit,  
doing some rubble rousing!

**We are moving from human foolishness  
to divine foolishness.**

**We won't *let* the dust settle. Won't go silent.  
Or, Stuff our anger. Be endlessly sad!**

**We won't let the dust settle...**

we've shaken off our dust and building up ourselves and God's ministry.

**We won't let the dust settle....**

we are....

disagreeing and staying alongside,  
focusing on what works,

on the ministry, on process and not product,  
on our own responsibilities.

On being angry...dawg gone it!

We are resilient!

I like Lent because it calls me  
to remember how resilient I already am...

and realize deeply the invitation toward new life begins with...me! My responses!

And I am capable....

I can welcome what's next.  
The good and bad, beautiful and ugly seeming...yes, I can.

~And just like Jesus, I travel this life learning as I go....grow.

~And just like Jesus, I am made able to stand up against what is not right/just in life.

~And just like Jesus, I can choose an alternative way to think and feel and act....not alone but in  
relationship with God and other disciples....

This is the part where I find out who I am!  
How resilient I am!  
And, I affirm: I can welcome what's next!