

Sunday, June 21, 2009

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Job 38: 1-4, 8-11; Psalm 107; 2 Corinthians 5: 14-17; Mark 4:35-41

We return to Ordinary Time after a wealth of feasts. In this season when so many head to a lake or ocean for vacation, we are to remember that God's womb birthed the waves. "Who shut in the sea when it burst forth from the womb?" God asks Job. God's creative birthing continues, says Paul, for "whoever is in Christ is a new creation." A cosmic adventure into the Cosmic Christ. In the gospel, fear sweeps over the disciples as something new is born. The waves swamp the boat and Jesus remains asleep. "Do you not care that we are perishing?" they cry. We know what happens next in the gospel; we know the disciples' question: "Who is this whom the wind and sea obey?"

Is something in your life swamping you, overwhelming, terrifying? Tell Jesus all about it and then ask the disciples' question directly to Jesus. Listen. Or, does the question, "Who is this?" strike an inner chord? Would you simply like to look at him who is so calm and authoritative. Look and respond to him. Whatever water you enter this summer, (even a bathroom shower or tub) remember to give thanks for the water you entered in baptism, the creative floods of God's love.

Thank you, God of womb-compassion, for immersing us in Christ. Whomever we know him to be now, thank you for the adventure of learning him more deeply, day by day.

Monday, June 22, 2009

Genesis 12: 1-9; Psalm 33; Matthew 7:1-5

Today we are introduced to Abram, father of nations, and common ancestor of Jews, Christians and Muslims. As Abram trusts God and moves out in a journey, he builds altars along the way. Jesus issues a most important "new" commandment: "Do not judge" and attaches the reason: "so that you may not be judged." Love one another, love as I have loved you, becomes a very specific and wise command in "do not judge." It is the nature of the human mind to judge, ie this is hot, this is cold. But to judge the motives of other people is frightening when we hear Jesus continue, "For the measure with which you judge will be the measure with which you will be judged."

What response arises in you when you realize that Jews are your kin, Muslims are your brothers and sisters? Will you pray for them, pray for peace in the Middle East, pray for reconciliation not only among Arabs and Jews but among us North American Christians and the devout followers of Islam? If you cannot, talk it all over with Jesus. You might invite Abram to join the conversation.

Happy is the nation whose God is our God! Your eye is on all who hope in you, and your steadfast love delivers all children of Abraham. Help us to love one another as you love us all.

Tuesday, June 23, 2009

Genesis 13:2, 5-18; Psalm 15; Matthew 7: 6, 12-14

Abram's offspring, we hear, are "like the dust of the earth." Perhaps Jews, Christians and Muslims might remember our dusty origins. Or like Abram and Lot, who could not live together "for their possessions were so great," and the land could not support them both, we might wonder with whom we can't live. Psalm 15 is a "wisdom psalm," describing the wise: "They take up no reproach against their neighbors; in their eyes the wicked are despised." Ah, judging some as wicked. Turf wars over everyone's holy land. And Jesus coming to welcome the wicked, to eat with them. How shall we ever live in unity and peace?

That last question is a lament, the most numerous kind of psalm among the 150 psalms. How? Why? (*Lamah* in Hebrew means "why?") As Paul writes, "Who can save us from this body of death?" this tumult of peoples? Cry out to God your fears and hopes and confusions. Jesus cried like that over Jerusalem. You are allowed.

Who can save us? Jesus, you have set us free. You alone are the savior of the world! Thank you! Deepen our hope and our love for one another, near neighbors and far neighbors.

Wednesday, June 24, 2009

Birth of John the Baptist

Isaiah 49: 1-6; Psalm 139; Acts 13: 22-26; Luke 1: 57-66, 80

Zechariah is adamant: "His name is John." *Yahonan* in Hebrew means "God is gracious." God is gracious to Israel, Isaiah reminds them, the Suffering Servant. It is too little that Israel merely survive; they are to be a light to the nations. God had been forming this new and last prophet of Israel from his mother's womb, as God does us all, claims the author of Psalm 139. In Acts, Paul addresses "all you descendants of Abraham's family," to remind us again of our common origin. And finally our liturgy of the Word ends with John's growing strong in spirit.

Remember how God is gracious to you. Where do you find grace at work in your life? How are you a light to the nations? You alone and we together as church are made prophets through baptism. And how do you grow strong in spirit? In Spirit? Ponder, hope, desire, ask.

John, strong in spirit, thank you for standing up to Herod's sin at so much cost. Help us to judge sin and not the sinner. Pray for our church that we might welcome sinners and be a light to the nations.

Thursday, June 25, 2009

Genesis 16:1-12,15-16; Psalm 106; Matthew 7: 21-29

Interesting that Abram who is a Chaldean at the age of 86 has a child with an Egyptian woman, Hagar, the slave of Sarai. From this child, Ishmael, would come the numerous Arab tribes whose warfaring continues to this day. Was it Sarai's harsh treatment of Hagar so very long ago that set up enmity between Jews and Arabs? In the gospel, Jesus warns that any prophecy or deeds of power done in his name are worthless unless we "do the will of [his] Father in heaven."

What is God's will? "My plans for you are plans of *shalom*." (Jer 29:11). Look over the week thus far. When did you act for peace, health, the well-being of others? When did you act with integrity? All these are meanings of *shalom*. When did you do God's will manifest in Jesus' will, his passionate desire that all are welcome, all be one?

Whatever we do in word or in work, Jesus, let it be done for God's glory and your hope for our unity, peace, health and integrity. Make us ambassadors of reconciliation.

Friday, June 26, 2009

Genesis 17: 1, 5, 9-10, 15-22; Psalm 128; Matthew 8: 1-4

God changes Abram's name and tells Abraham that God approves of Ishmael, will bless him and make him fruitful. However, the covenant will be made with Isaac whom Abraham will beget at the age of 99. Abraham laughs! Jesus has finished his Sermon on the Mount, modeled after Moses' trip up Mount Sinai, and Matthew begins to follow the action laid out in the first gospel, Mark's. Jesus meets a leper who begs, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." Jesus touches the diseased man and says, "I do choose."

What do you choose? How do you make your choices, the large ones and the daily decisions? Compose your own morning offering, perhaps praying it before you even open your eyes. Offer your choices, many of which you won't meet until the day unfolds, for God's glory, for God's will of *shalom*.

We do choose your will and your glory, God of peace, health and integrity. Give peace to our world, health to those sick in mind or body, integrity to us all. Thank you.

Saturday, June 27, 2009

Genesis 18: 1-15; Canticle from Luke 1; Matthew 8: 5-17

Sarai has now become Sarah. Abraham welcomes three guests under the oaks of Mamre, hastens to order Sarah to bake three cakes, "runs" (at 99) to find a calf for his servant to prepare. The guests ask about Sarah, who "laughs to herself" when she overhears their promise that she will bear a child. The guests morph into "the Lord" who,

when Sarah denies she laughed, says, “Oh yes, you did laugh.” End of reading. We respond with Mary’s Magnificat. Like Hannah, perhaps the originator of the canticle, Sarah had been barren so long. Jesus moves south to Capernaum and wonders at the faith of a Roman centurion, greater than that of any Israelite. He heals the soldier’s servant. Next he moves to Peter’s house, heals Peter’s mother in law and all the sick and demon-possessed who are brought to him.

Let us remember and pray for all those who are aging and deny their limits, their diminishment. Let us pray for all those who want to run at 99 and are confined to wheel chair or bed. If you are one of those, or love one of those, remind them that God loves our great desires to offer hospitality as Abraham did. Let us pray for those at any age who get their identity and self-worth from what they do, achieve. Let us pray for those who overwork, not just to care for their dependents, but because it fills that hole in their hearts that only God can fill.

Save us from our denying the truth, Holy Spirit. Set us free from any traces of workaholism in what we do. Let all that we are and do be for God’s glory. Guide us into all truth.