

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



March 13, 2022

## CHANGED

*It isn't if or when - we already have*

by Drew Downs

We've often heard the phrase "it's not a matter of if, but when." And when we're looking ahead, that sense of "when" is always "out there" somewhere. It is, after all, inevitable. We will be changed.

The obvious question, then, is when? And how?

This is why we take time to *reflect* on our time. Because it is in reflecting that most of

our learning takes place. And this is really hard work (which is why we so often "forget" to do it).

Taking time to reflect, not to evaluate and label "good" or "bad," but to see things as they are, to dream of what they could be, and to be generous with ourselves allows us to fully learn from our experience. And one of the most profound things to learn is how much we've already changed.

# AFTER THE EPIPHANY

*Winter 2022*

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## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

As we continue to explore the question *What is our tomorrow?* I suspect we will find the questions we've asked ourselves, the observations we've been making, the desires we've hoped to fulfill, and the opportunities the Spirit has offered us are revealing themselves to us in new ways.

We are now less than one week away from the two-year anniversary of our last Sunday before the shut down. A moment of deep confusion and concern. But it was also a moment of profound opportunity. People jumped at the opportunity to share and connect in new ways; ways we never would have otherwise.

As we think about what we've learned and what we want to do with that learning, let us include in our thoughts the questions that we need to reflect on with one another. Questions for our present moment. Particularly these two:

The bishop is exploring the reintegration of the common cup and a shift toward mask-suggested rather than mask-required.

The question is not *will* we be doing these in the future. *Or even when.* The true question is how are your neighbors feeling about this *and* how do you feel, too.

In the coming weeks, as we explore the great questions of the pandemic time and our work through *We Shall Be Changed*, include these in your conversations with your neighbors. For we still have much to learn and new opportunities before us.

With love,  
Drew

# LENT

*Winter 2022*

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## FOR SUNDAY

*The Second Sunday of Lent*

March 13, 2022

### **Collect**

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

From Luke 13:31-35

"How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

### **Reflection**

How do we interpret the gospel text when Jesus challenges the Pharisees? What are the assumptions we're making when we read this?

One of the common ones are that the Pharisees are "the bad guys". Or the *moralists*. The leaders or the rules-lawyers. We treat them like the *antagonists* and Jesus is the *protagonist*. He is definitely "the good guy."

Sometimes we read it like Jesus is the Perfect Man so the Pharisees *must* be wrong. Whether we understand exactly *why* is less important. We're confident that *they must be*.

# LENT

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Sometimes we *like* to see Jesus get mad, frustrated, or irritable. Perhaps because it *humanizes* him or makes him more relatable. *Or it justifies our own anger.*

There are other assumptions we bring with us into the text, of course. About how we're supposed to read it and why. Who these people are. Even whether or not we're supposed to like them.

Let us choose to be conscious of those assumptions. Precisely because these assumptions act like shortcuts that skip over the important work of reflecting on the gospel. So then, how do we *hear* these hard words for the Pharisees? For the church?

As we approach the two-year anniversary of our Pandemic time, I'm hearing Jesus's voice differently. Not with scorn or anger, but with compassion and a generous heart. "How often have I desired..." he says. Desired to *mother* them, *protect* them. But couldn't. Because they weren't willing to *be mothered*. So are they choosing to be "grown up"?

He has healed the sick and cast out countless demons; teaching his followers to walk in his way of love. And he desires to *nurture and protect them all*.

Jesus is telling them that the question is *not* about Jesus at all. He desires it. And he is responsible for doing that very thing for others *right now*. The choice, then, is theirs.

I'm reminded of all the excuses I've made to not do what Jesus wants. How unwilling I've been to be nurtured by Jesus because I'd rather be right. It is way easier to trust in our own egos. Certainty. Ideas about what is right. Much easier than trusting Jesus.

And yet, sometimes I am willing. So perhaps there's hope for us yet.

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