

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



JUNE 11, 2023

TRANSGRESS

the limits and purpose of boundaries

by Drew Downs

Sometimes we protect the rules by breaking them.

If this were *always* true, then there would be no rules. No point in making them anymore.

If this were *never* true, then nothing would change. Especially what needs to.

As concepts go, this is one that requires the truth being somewhere between always and

never. The happy medium is not halfway between the two, however, but somewhere closer to true about 5-10% of the time. For transgressing the rules to be valuable, we have to do it sparingly.

Transgressing is supposed to be difficult, counterintuitive, and lead to undesirable outcomes. So that when we do it, we not only get what is at stake, we help each other realize what we should've known all along.

ORDINARY TIME

2023

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!

Unseasonable Summer

Every year, right after school gets out, right around the first week of June, I take the family to Ditzler Orchard to pick strawberries. It's a family tradition. We received the disappointing news this week that the crop hasn't worked out this year. A good spring turned to drought has left the pickings extraordinarily slim.

It brings to mind that crazy winter a decade ago, when we saw 80 degree weather *in February! In Michigan!* Everything started to bloom early. Then March came in and killed it all.

That year, my family went up to Traverse City around Cherry Festival time. For the first time, they imported cherries from Poland. Unbelievable.

Talking with a clerk, I mentioned the crazy weather. She said it took out 90% of their crop. *Oof*, I said. *That's tough*. Then she told me that a blight came and took out 90% of what survived. I was speechless.

It seems as if we don't notice this stuff until it effects us. But that doesn't speak to the whole of it. We only seem to care when it is present. Because we've experienced droughts before. We just prefer to think we never will again.

Our faith teaches us to prepare. And to recognize that scarcity and abundance both happen. But more than these, it teaches us that our work, what makes us remarkable, is to share, heal, and help each other grow. So it isn't just us and our families. But our neighbors and our planet.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2023

FOR SUNDAY

Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 11, 2023

Collect

O God, from whom all good proceeds: Grant that by your inspiration we may think those things that are right, and by your merciful guiding may do them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, for she said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well. When Jesus came to the leader's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, "Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. And the report of this spread throughout that district.

PENTECOST

Reflection

This week: three stories at once.

In the first, Jesus calls a new disciple, Matthew. And he brings him to salaciously dine with outsiders: people with whom observant Hebrews are forbidden to do exactly that. And so, of course, the Pharisees have a problem with this.

The second half of the reading offers two stories intertwined: one about a girl who has died and the other about a woman who is stricken with hemorrhages.

We might be tempted to focus on one half or the other. And often, this is good advice. But it can also be useful to consider how it all goes together. Especially given the wider story.

We see Jesus transgressing the purity rules by eating with people he isn't supposed to. He heals someone no else can heal. And then he raises a child from the dead. Outside this reading, there are further examples of transgressions.

We often see these moments as miraculous. And they are. We also see the level of suffering behind them: the people rejected, the pain of affliction and of grief.

What we may miss is the human relationship to the suffering. Which is also something we overlook in our lives. Women are frequently refused interventions and treated like the pain must be in their heads. A reaction from doctors which *triples* when the patient is a black woman.

People don't just come to Jesus because they believe he can help them. People come to him because other people aren't helping them. So Jesus brought Matthew (and us) in to show us who we are called to help. Not just where the need is. But also how we alone may be suited to helping them. Even by virtue of noticing.

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