

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



June 19, 2022

AFRAID

fear of change is still fear

by Drew Downs

There are few things Jesus said more often than "fear not" and "don't be afraid." This was his calling card.

Walking on water, freaking people out, doing miraculous things, *coming back from the dead*. Every time, he says "don't be afraid."

It is possible that Jesus is offering a way of being in the world: part stoic, part Jedi. And it is just as likely that he was saying this to

people who had every right to be afraid and he was trying to calm them.

But given what we know, it always boggles my mind that we continue to use fear as an excuse. Like Jesus would be like "Oh, yeah, you were afraid. It's all good." When he *never* acted like that and often said the opposite. So yes, we can be afraid of change. But we don't get to use that to justify *not* following Jesus.

ORDINARY TIME

Spring 2022

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!

If you follow the big conversation in the Episcopal Church, you probably had a weird couple of weeks. Two weeks ago, Episcopalians were fighting over the nature of communion and who gets to receive it. And just as that matter seems to have died down, a new debate raged last week.

Boxed Lunches. At this year's General Convention of The Episcopal Church taking place in Baltimore in July, boxed breakfasts and lunches will be provided for all deputies. Which doesn't sound like news to anybody who isn't a deputy. But this news caused much consternation among the peoples. For many reasons.

One reason, however, stuck out. Each meal would be \$32 each. And each diocese would be charged whether or not they took one.

I certainly have some opinions about this, as I'm sure you do. But our opinions about this are far less significant than what these public battles are actually *doing* for us.

Are they *truly* raising awareness? Are we making a more just, equitable, hope-filled world of love and generosity? Do we *feel* like beacons of Christ? Or do we like to fight? Have our way? Complain?

There are many justice elements to both of these stories. Let us not cast them as irrelevant. But let us also see the ways we shine the light of Christ. I'd rather we be known for the generosity of our feeding the hungry than the bickering over the liturgical container the food comes in.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

Spring 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 19, 2022

Collect

○ Lord, make us have perpetual love and reverence for your holy Name, for you never fail to help and govern those whom you have set upon the sure foundation of your loving-kindness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Luke 8:26-39

"They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss."

Reflection

When Jesus encounters a man chained in a cemetery, only to discover that he is filled with a *legion* of demons, we *know* this is going to be an exciting story. And this one doesn't disappoint.

A legion is a collection of Roman soldiers, numbering between three and six thousand people. For the demon to tell Jesus to call it "Legion" is evoking a scale that is mind-blowing. When one demon can do incredible disruption to a person or his family, *thousands* must be unbearable.

This is, of course, the reason the man is chained among the dead. To protect the people from the demons within him.

ORDINARY TIME

We have a really handy sense of the metaphor when it comes to demons. If we say to one another, that a friend is "battling his demons" we all get it and send our sympathy. Our demons can vary depending on our situation. For some it is addiction. Others it is illness. And for others it is relationships.

We also look to science fiction or horror films to better explore the demonic in more literal terms. We can see the evils that infect us and find ourselves rooting them out and building new patterns which represent health and growth for us.

Of course, my regular refrain when wrestling with the stuff of scripture is that we tend to either take it too literally or not literally enough. We have a way of avoiding the profoundly revelatory truth embedded in the gospel by thinking its about demons in a story or else it is a friend's struggle with alcoholism.

What we need is to engage the demons in the story as they are and go from there.

And when we do, we find that the demons unsurprisingly fear Jesus. After all, he's in the demon-stomping business.

But what we might find curious is that the demons fear him *before* he's done anything. Only the demons know who he is and what he's capable of.

And yet, when Jesus puts an end to the town's demon problem, what happens to the people who are no longer tormented by them? They, too, fear Jesus.

We have an easy time comprehending why evil fears good. But why the *people* fear it too—that is extraordinarily curious. Perhaps there are evils beyond the demons that they would rather Jesus not uncover.

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