

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



June 26, 2022

DISCIPLE

keeping the learning going

by Drew Downs

People have been following gurus for as long as gurus have been around. Just imagine those first humans walking around and one guy chooses *not* to eat something poisonous and another one goes "that is one smart dude! What else does he know?"

We follow other people because we want to become better at something they know about. So we become disciples, followers of someone who "gets it" in a way we don't.

The disciples we encounter fall into two camps: people trying to be better and people trying to implement someone else's philosophy. Which sounds a little like the old debate: being vs. doing.

As Christians, each generation sees itself as the next generation of disciples, following Jesus. Which we see as both being better and doing better. The point is that we are always learning—and keeping it going.

ORDINARY TIME

Summer 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!

We are once again in the time of year we call "Ordinary Time". Which, let's be honest, always comes with a chuckle. We hear the idea that we are once again, in the midst of Ordinary and it always strikes us someone's sarcastic joke. The times almost never feel ordinary.

This is even more true because it always arrives right about at the end of school and when life just gets different. Even those without kids start to make plans—either for their own getaways or how they deal with others'. For just about everyone, it is a season of *possibility*. Ordinary feels like the completely wrong word.

Of course, the prospect of something *feeling* like normal, or perhaps the return of something situationally normal, like summer routines or regular visits, is a welcome sight. A joy that feels like a welcome *ordinary*.

I suspect, though, that we often make too much of such thoughts. Particularly as Jesus has such precious little to say to encourage such meanderings. Instead, his measure is far more geared toward *making* the possible *more ordinary*. He never encourages us to "return to normal" but frequently encourages us to make God's dream our normal.

A dream that involves Sabbath and Shalom: Rest and Peace. Not *because* we are back in Ordinary Time, but because even these days we bring more love and justice to our community.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

Summer 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Third Sunday after Pentecost

June 26, 2022

Collect

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; 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 9:51-62

"When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?""

Reflection

This is the literal turning point in Luke's narrative. Jesus has turned his face toward Jerusalem. It is time to head to the crucifixion; the crucible of the story.

And what has preceded this was Jesus sending his closest followers out into the world with his power to heal and proclaim the good news to all they meet. And among that group that went and did and came back having done incredible things are James and John.

It is remarkable that their response to a little adversity in this moment is to rain down the fires of heaven upon their perceived adversary.

ORDINARY TIME

It is remarkable, not because it isn't what we might do. Because it is quite like something many among us *would* do. No, it is remarkable that they have done incredible acts of *healing* and their gut response is to *kill*. They have preserved life and now they are eager to take it.

In our day, we often call this "playing God." We see it among the healing professions, especially among specialty surgeons whose daily actions are life and death. And we see it among our soldiers who literally choose who lives and dies in a moment.

It is easy for most of us to condemn James and John for this bout of hubris. It is an obviously extraordinary over-reaction to a moment. And most of us will naturally see the hypocrisy of it.

But many of us engage in this very torment and challenge on a regular basis. Not so *literally*, of course. But also something more than figuratively.

The condemnation of people for their sexuality is an obvious example. But also the condemning of the poor or the mentally ill to the streets. The simple fact that there are more vacant houses in the United States than homeless population reveals the cruel detachment we have to the ordering of our world.

It isn't just James and John, of course. Each of the people who speak up demonstrate a kind of *missing-the-point* that is endemic to Jesus-following. That there is so much that we take for granted as rational. *Let me take care of one last thing* seems like a fair request. And it is *fair*. In the Kingdom of the World. But in the Kin-dom of God, it means something different.

Perhaps we don't yet know what the point is. Just that killing people and not taking Jesus seriously are examples of *not* getting the point.

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