

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

JULY 9, 2023



REPENT

why we keep having to remember what it means

by Drew Downs

To repent means to change. Or, quite literally, to turn. Turn away and turn toward.

In Jesus's use, he is speaking to turning away from sin and toward grace. Which we all get, I think, about 66%. We've got the idea down. It's just confused by the specific ways people use it.

The word *repent* is often used as a cudgel to make people change in ways that align with

denominational doctrine. It becomes a way of policing sexual activity, gender identity, and political proclivities, rather than a way of encouraging healthy, faith-filled relationships with ourselves and with other people.

In other words, this simple, physical word about turning around and facing God is saddled with the baggage of shame. And most of us really ought to turn away from that and toward a greater vision of grace.

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!

Being Good

After calling his followers to go out into the world, Jesus warned them that it would be difficult. But, as we read last week, he said that it all depends on welcome. Welcoming and being welcomed. Then this week, we have frustration and disappointment.

This feels like two sides of what it means to "be good". Being good involves generosity, faithfulness, and the courage to encourage others. And sometimes, the commitment to being good leads to the assumption that we *are* good.

We might embody this strange sense of trying to balance ourselves: being as generous and sure in our faith as we can while also avoiding hubris.

Doesn't it seem like Jesus really is trying to get us to stop being so full of ourselves? So certain of our correctness? And so forceful with our way? Besides, isn't he the one telling us to fear not and trust in him? Not because we're right or because we're *supposed* to be certain, but because we can simply trust him?

He's telling us the burden is light. We really can let go of that certainty.

[This is part 2 of our summer series on apostleship. The series is loosely based on the lectionary.]

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2023

FOR SUNDAY

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

July 9, 2023

Collect

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Jesus said to the crowd, "To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

PENTECOST

Reflection

There is a lot going on in this passage. But it may help to remember that Jesus spent the whole previous chapter instructing his disciples about what they are to face. Then, it says at the beginning of this chapter that Jesus goes to teach in their cities.

This is when John the Baptist sends some of his disciples to check out Jesus. To make sure he's the real deal. And Jesus receives this with grace and humility.

All of this is set-up for what he then says about the people he's meeting. He contrasts the motivations of John and himself toward doing the will of God with the cities and their leaders.

The most moving is that first, very human response. That Jesus is being made to feel like a trained monkey. That his work is merely entertaining; his generosity, merely consumed; his humanity, merely commodified.

And because I think most of us can recognize that sensation, we might miss the depth of the critique in it. Assuming Jesus is just complaining about himself. Or naming a personal feeling. Or that this is simply a recommendation that the people be a bit more gracious to him. And not, say, a challenge to something far deeper.

There is something about self-interest that goes beyond a single moment of selfishness. Some one-off experience of which we can say "maybe we don't do that."

Treating Jesus like a trained monkey means the community never *actually* has to turn its eyes toward God. Never has to become inviting, welcoming; or even become good hosts for the Kin-dom. We can simply do our own things and get Jesus to help out when we're in a jam. In truth, Jesus isn't a safety net to take advantage of in arrogance, but in the humility of any challenging moment of great turbulent change.

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