

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

August 14, 2022



CLARITY

the misunderstood gift

by Drew Downs

Todd Henry refers to clarity as a precious gift we can give to one another. Being clear, not only with our words, but in our expectations, rules, and professional boundaries.

Being clear about what we expect as leaders *frees* people to offer their best work.

Clarity, then, is the enemy of vagueness. When we have precise timelines, written definitions, we can all be on the same page.

As we will explore this week in the gospel, our expectations *for* clarity can often bring *more* frustration and confusion.

Clarity can also be our means of avoiding the work. It can be a source of perpetual information gathering when it is time to make a decision.

Like getting new glasses, seeking clarity mostly helps us see what we already know.

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!

It is truly good to be back. I love vacation. I love getting away. And you *know* I love the chance to go visit some of my favorite places in the whole world (and lay in a hammock). But, when you give yourself *time* and *space* and allow yourself the chance to *unplug* for awhile, it really *does* feel good to get back into something *like* normal.

Or at least, you can *appreciate* normal for what it is. Even its foibles.

Over the last few weeks, I've invited us to explore what it means to vacation. Not exactly literally, but emotionally and spiritually. What it is to alter our sense of normal and get more rest.

I'm curious what this has meant for you.

Does it mean living with less *intensity*? — I didn't check on the news for two weeks. Which also means I haven't been paying much attention to Lambeth at all. As a church nerd, that's a big deal! I also don't feel the intense emotions of it all and none of the "well, they **have** to do ____!"

Perhaps it means more intention — Like setting aside specific family time or working on vacation journal. Or maybe something you *only really* do on vacation can be imported into "real life."

What about Sabbath/vacation *needs* to be normalized?

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

Summer 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

August 14, 2022

Collect

Almighty God, you have given your only Son to be for us a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life: Give us grace to receive thankfully the fruits of his redeeming work, and to follow daily in the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Luke 12:49-56

"You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

Reflection

This is an intense passage from the gospel of Luke, full of frustration and talk of division. It is the kind of passage that frightens us more than anything. Most of all, I think, we want to understand *why* he's saying this.

If we go and flip through the rest of chapter 12, we can see that Jesus is guiding them in a particular direction: to see the evil and injustice in the world and to feel the urgency to *challenge it now*.

We got a piece of this two weeks ago and then again last week.

The lectionary skipped over an important element in the story, however.

ORDINARY TIME

Right after we read about Jesus teaching about urgency in a parable, Peter asks him if this teaching is for the disciples specifically or is it for everyone? This seems like a pretty fair question, doesn't it? He's looking for a bit of clarity. Wants to know the parameters of it all.

That's when Jesus launches into a dark parable that flows into this talk of division within families we get this week.

It seems important that Jesus goes into this talk *in response to* the attempt to clarify. In a sense, it tells us that *because* they didn't fully understand what Jesus was saying, Jesus sensed that he needed to *teach them* more. Rather than offer a *prescription* for how the world works, Jesus is trying to teach them *how to approach their world*.

But he *also* says that they should know this already. Because the signs are there. We are staring at them and pretending we can't interpret them. In *seeking* clarity, Jesus seems to be saying that Peter is *avoiding the urgency*. It's a delay tactic. If you can look at X and Y with the weather and predict Z, why act so helpless when talking about people?

Most of us would just say that people are complicated. Sure. But we're also not talking about rocket science.

Jesus was just talking to them about injustice, hypocrisy, and oppression. He warned them of their leaders, the wealthy, and those professionals who keep the people in a kind of underclass. It's pretty obvious that this is a message that divides.

From the outside, the abstract idea of division is wrong. But from a community already politically divided into haves and have-nots, *clarity reveals division*. That is precisely what Jesus was offering his disciples. It just revealed stuff Peter didn't like.

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