

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

August 21, 2022



## RIGHT

*always looking for the right thing*

by Drew Downs

We all ask ourselves the question: what is the right thing? Faced with confusion, when the path forward isn't so obvious. When we really aren't sure *what* the right thing is.

This week, we'll see what it looks like when there are *two* right answers butting up against each other. But here, I simply want to invite us into wondering what we *think* we're doing in the first place. Why we assume there is *one* right answer.

This is the underlying problem of looking for *THE* right answer: like the Highlander, there can be only one. Except when there are two. Or more. Then we have to choose which is *more* right. But then we aren't looking for *the* right answer, but the *most* right answer. And *that* is a whole different thing. *Except we never treat it as different!*

If we're all right, we need *other* values. Like good, generous, and loving.

# ORDINARY TIME

*Summer 2022*

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## 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!

For most of the country, the Labor Day weekend marks the unofficial end of summer. It's a common cultural marker that reminds us that its time to change our wardrobes, change routines, and start preparing for fall.

Here in Indiana, with our schools starting in August, (and some places in July!), we start thinking about fall...in the middle of the hottest month. For me, it's kind of like moving to Georgia and needing to think about Christmas when it's still 70 out.

And yet here we are! Most of our kids went back to school this past week. High Point Youth Group kicked off its new year this week. And host of other possibilities are beginning.

What I've invited us to do this summer is to bring vacation learning forward *into* the rest of our lives. Precisely because of how strong the *norms* of "Fall" and "Back to School" and "Return to Normal" are. How resistant these modes of thinking are to taking time, relaxing, or unscheduled time.

As I've written before, the hammock is my icon of vacation: an image I use to manifest the need to rest. But God did not command us to hallow the Sabbath for a couple weeks each summer and then put our noses to the grindstone for 350 days straight. That isn't a normal worth returning to.

Sabbath *normalizes* rest. It is an act of resistance in a culture of productivity. God wants us to experience vacation all year long.

With love,  
Drew

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost*

August 21, 2022

### **Collect**

Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of your Name; 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 13:10-17

"And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?"

### **Reflection**

Essentially, Jesus is stripping the debate down to get at its fundamental purpose. What is the Sabbath for?

This, of course, doesn't do much to actually change the debate. It just strips it of some of its obscuring rhetoric. Because it will still come down to two differing priorities: following God's command literally or following God's command intentionally.

This is something I've observed among almost every debate I've ever encountered: people almost never have *opposite* positions. We aren't running around with 50% of the population arguing the sky is orange.

# ORDINARY TIME

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Even our most divisive convictions are founded, not on *opposite* beliefs, but different priorities, which put us moving in different directions.

So when someone argues that we should have a more "high church" liturgy, with formal prayers, incense, sanctus bells, and *everything* gets chanted, they do so because tradition inspires them. *And* it has a way of connecting and uniting us.

And when someone argues that we should practice a "low church" liturgy, with spontaneous prayers, hymns that are easy to sing, and a less tradition-focused approach, they do so because they want fewer barriers to evangelism.

In one sense, we look at these approaches to church as opposites. But underneath are nearly *identical values*. What separates them is *priority*. Which yields different paths.

When Jesus heals someone in a synagogue on the Sabbath, he knows the leaders will see this as confrontational. But he also isn't doing it to be contrarian jerk. He's trying to teach—show the people what a priority of new life in compassion and love looks like.

It looks like healing a woman who has been afflicted for **18 years!** And it also looks like putting her health and safety above tradition. These are most obvious.

It is also about shifting priority. From legalism to compassion. From certainty in what we think the Law says to what the Law is clearly about.

Just as most parents find a time when "because I said so" stops being effective. Some choose to stick with it; to diminishing returns...and far more conflict. Other parents adjust *how they use* their priority to be heard.

What are we even doing if we aren't trying to learn how to be more like Jesus and the God of love?

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