

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

September 12, 2021



COURAGE

Gracefully living in the now.

by Drew Downs

Peter shows courage in naming Jesus Messiah.

He also shows courage in standing up to Jesus in the moment.

Jesus shows courage in confronting that temptation to avoid the challenge ahead of them.

Following Jesus takes courage.

It often seems like we encourage one another to display courage to benefit ourselves or our standing. Or to only display courage in perseverance.

The courage Jesus *en-courages* is to challenge in the face of injustice, not instability; to love in the face of hate, not selfishness; to risk for the sake of God's command, not human tradition. We are called to a courage that transforms.

ORDINARY TIME

Summer 2021

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Nine years ago, St. Stephen's gathered with our closest neighboring churches for a celebration of common worship we called Holypalooza. It is a unique expression of what we call ecumenism: a gathering that crosses denominational lines. It is ultimately the manifestation of what Jesus was challenged to do in last week's gospel from Mark 7: to break the boundaries to widen the circle.

The original concept for Holypalooza was as much grace-filled as it was practical. We represent three relatively similar mainline traditions who are all neighbors and all facing the same demographic future. **And** we are surrounded by Indiana State University. Shouldn't we do *something*?

The original Holypalooza was a block party in August that hoped to attract students. It was not nearly as attractive as they thought it would be. But it was a big blowout and a lot of fun (and work)!

The founders were not solely motivated to attract college students. Their real purpose was to work together, to find common cause, and to lay the groundwork for a new era of neighborliness that might engender hope and shared work. A purpose that is fulfilled over time through doing the work.

This year, Holypalooza will exist primarily online. And as I write this, we are not sure whether we will be open to in-person gathering this year. But nonetheless, I hope you join us for worship at **10:30**. See the Announcements for details.

We will still have our 8:00 service this Sunday. And in the spirit of the ecumenical work, St. Stephen's youth are joining the combined youth group this fall. Our work continues, grows, and changes in fascinating ways.

Drew+

ORDINARY TIME

Summer 2021

FOR SUNDAY

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 12, 2020

Collect

O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Mark 8:27-38

“Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

Reflection

Who among us hasn't been Peter? Called on by the teacher, given the right answer, being lifted up...and then...humiliated. Perhaps only those who have never volunteered, risked, or put themselves out there.

This week's gospel follows the highs and lows of following Jesus. The ecstasy of understanding and the pain of getting things so wrong. And for Peter (and us), the particular pain that comes from not fully understanding why.

There is a lot going on in this gospel that I love to explore, but I'm taken this week with the charge Jesus makes against Peter. No, not in calling him Satan, the tempter. What he says after that. He says “For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

ORDINARY TIME 2021

Two weeks ago, in Mark 7:8, Jesus challenges the Pharisees saying: “You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.” Peter is doing the same thing!

And what is that exactly? Peter is tempting Jesus to avoid what God has commanded of him. To bring wholeness to the world by challenging human tradition’s commitment to death, despair, and discord. By revealing the healing grace of God.

How easy it is to look around and see what is happening around us with fear and longing. To want to protect tradition in all its forms. The good things we value and credit with making our lives better.

And how hard it is to see past it—to what God is revealing to us. To go with that instead. To admit to ourselves that this is in fact our work. Work for us to do together.

And yet I am hopeful. Hopeful that grace is that powerful. That it is beyond my comprehension. And that it is not up to me to save the world from itself. Because it is work that requires all of us. To learn to love in this weird, God way. To follow these weird, God commands. And become this weird, God world. As a people moved by grace to share grace; by peace to share peace, by love to share love. For us all.

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