

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

September 22, 2024



BAD NEWS

our fear of talking about death

by Drew Downs

We can probably relate to the feeling the disciples have when Jesus talks about dying in Jerusalem. We don't like talking about this stuff any more than they do.

I suspect we all know this is a problem, right? That we're supposed to be better at it. In general. And with Jesus and ourselves, specifically. After all, Jesus didn't stay dead. We are people of a resurrected Messiah and savior of the world.

Maybe it feels wrong. Like we're not supposed to talk about it or we might manifest it into existence. This, of course, is fear and pain talking.

What if, instead, we recognize the hope and generosity in talking about death in advance? In sharing our wishes with people we love and encourage them to share with us? What if we invited each other to accept the fear and thrive on hope, like Jesus?

ORDINARY TIME

2024

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!

Rector's Forum

I am looking forward to this weekend, which is jam-packed! We have a Family Game Night with potluck dinner on Friday night, the Pride Festival on the campus of Indiana State University on Saturday, and then on Sunday, we are having our first Rector's Forum after the 10:00 service! That is one busy weekend!

I want to highlight the forum in particular to give you a sense of its purpose and why I think you might be interested.

Over the last few years, there have been things that have come up that have needed some exploration and conversation in community. Sometimes new ideas, concerns, or interests that need a little bit of time to introduce for discussion. And until this summer, it didn't dawn on me that we could have a short, regular gatherings at church. To be honest, I tend to over-prepare for these sorts of events and pack too much in. This is intended to be the opposite of that: simple and easy. And thirty minutes, tops.

Our first forum will be on the cheery topic of death: as in *How to get our spiritual affairs in order*. What to do when someone we love dies and how to prepare others for when we die. It is a gift to offer one another the grace of having made some decisions in advance.

Future forums may include discovering ministry priorities, strategies for reading the Bible, and faithful politics. If you have an idea for a future forum, I'd be glad to explore the topic with you! Join us September 22 for our first one!

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2024

FOR SUNDAY

Proper 20B

September 22, 2024

Collect

Grant us, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Mark 9:30-37

Jesus and his disciples passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

ORDINARY TIME

Reflection

Jesus predicts his death for a second time. And the difference in the disciples is notable.

Last week we read about the first Passion prediction, after Jesus asked the disciples who they say to other people that the Son of Man is: *The Messiah*, Peter responds. The Messiah, the liberator and leader, come to save the Hebrew people from oppression.

So when Jesus says that he, their savior, will die in Jerusalem, Peter tries to stop this from happening. He speaks up—and is rebuked for it.

Little wonder that the disciples stay silent this time! But then we read that it isn't only fear of saying the wrong thing or not wanting to get rebuked like Peter. They are silent because they've been arguing between each other about which of them is the best disciple to Jesus. *They are embarrassed!*

I am confident that we are supposed to see these responses as mistakes. The disciples aren't complete screwups. But they aren't gods among men, either. They are having a hard time understanding what Jesus is up to—and they can't fully buy into the idea that Jesus is saving them through love and humility rather than violence and swagger. It doesn't match their vision of leadership, so it feels *wrong* in that sense.

Isn't this our struggle? That we, too, define leadership by performative strength much more than compassionate love? That we value fear-filled bravado rather than joy, hope, and humility? Don't we insist to one another that we must *do something* while treating love, prayer, and dignity as nothing?

Jesus offers us a different view of our world. What would it take for us to believe him? To follow in his way? To actually believe in a Messiah who leads with love?

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