

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

September 26, 2021



FEAR

Leaning in, not overcoming

by Drew Downs

"Do not be afraid."

Jesus says this constantly. Often when the proverbial horse has left the barn. Telling us to not be afraid when we already are seems a bit...harsh. And ridiculous.

"Oh, OK! I'll just switch this off...There. Not afraid. Phew!"

But Jesus isn't asking us to do the impossible.

He reminds us that fear is not a terminal diagnosis. We need not remain afraid, or allow the fear to overwhelm us.

Fear is not the enemy. It is not an emotion that must be defeated. Fear is our body's response to uncertainty and concern for our safety. So when I am afraid, I know my body is trying to protect me. Experiencing fear, I can learn why I respond that way. And ways to make fear far less consuming.

ORDINARY TIME

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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

Looking forward in the time of Corona continues to be a fascinating mix of excitement and confusion. The conflicting pressures of wanting to "move on" while the challenges continue to be present makes the whole thing seem like an absurdist play. I sometimes feel like we're in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. We decide to move on and yet here we stay. Of course, what is most absurd is that we think we can control what we can't.

It seems that, much like fear itself, the coronavirus pandemic is an opportunity to learn from our discomfort and dislocation. We may not want to, of course. We can always give in and pretend like everything is normal. Then our fears can be founded. OR we can look at just what is within our power - and revel in that.

I am excited that our youth are working with our neighbor churches, bringing a bit of Holypalooza into every week.

We are also participating in a joint diocesan initiative called Church Buildings For Collaborative Partnerships (CBCP), which will help us learn how to utilize and invest in our building to be a generator of ministry in our neighborhood. Our local team will be bringing insights and guidance later in the program year.

We are embarking on a small capital campaign to *Preserve Our Panes*, an opportunity for the congregation to help preserve our church's stained glass windows.

And we continue to upgrade our communications technology - a project necessitated by the pandemic, but an upgrade that was also overdue.

Drew+

ORDINARY TIME

Summer 2021

FOR SUNDAY

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 26, 2020

Collect

O God, you declare your almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity: Grant us the fullness of your grace, that we, running to obtain your promises, may become partakers of your heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Reading

From Mark 9:38-50

"John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.""

Reflection

I feel for the disciples. It sometimes seems like they can't do anything right.

Jesus was just telling them about a terrible future with his suffering and dying and what are they doing? Jesus catches them bragging with each other. They were arguing about which of them was the greatest disciple. It must have been utterly humiliating.

But Jesus isn't trying to humiliate them, is he? He's trying (always) to teach them.

Turn that bragging around and get with the program. That is closer to it. Being great means you don't need to be first. Others do.

ORDINARY TIME 2021

Then he flips it all around. He highlights a child – a way of saying *listen to the unheard* – this is our greatest need.

Now the disciples are struggling to live into that teaching. Right off the bat, they are silencing rather than listening.

The disciples confront someone proclaiming the Good News who *isn't* a disciple. They look and see a counterfeit. Jesus looks and sees *his* message spreading through other people.

But Jesus doesn't let their miscalculation go. He responds to it. Because if they had left it at simply *hey, that guy's not one of us* then Jesus could have simply said, *yes he is. **Leave him alone.*** But they didn't. They tried to stop him. And *that's* their great mistake.

Jesus's teaching amounts to: *don't get in their way. Don't be an obstacle.*

A teaching that is expressly about the kin-dom work, not the certification to do it.

More importantly, though, is that Jesus pairs the teachings together. *Listen to the unheard. And Don't be a stumbling block.* Taken together, a bigger picture emerges. A vision of compassion and a way of ordering the world that *supports* the vulnerable rather than exploits them. That vision is the kin-dom.

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