

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

October 23, 2022



RIGHTEOUS

as a dirty word

by Drew Downs

It is easy to offer righteous indignation or outrage in the midst of struggle.

It is also easy to level a critique of this "self-righteous" behavior.

In recent years, the idea of being *considered* righteous is something of a mixed bag. Many find strength to persevere (persist!) through the simple idea that they are doing "what's right". And for people of faith, we see this in

doing what we believe Jesus has commanded us to do.

When Jesus seems to caution us not to judge ourselves as righteous, it raises an uncomfortable question: is it wrong to think we're doing what's right? Or is it that we are judging ourselves as right?

I suspect the problem has less to do with knowing what's right than judging **us** so.

ORDINARY TIME

Autumn 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!

Hearing Aid

When I first walked into St. Stephen's, I knew the acoustics would be a challenge. My internship was in a congregation without carpet and, like us, loved its music. I had to learn to enunciate in seminary, so I was no stranger to the challenge.

How we hear *anything* is quite a marvel of engineering. And most of us take such a miracle for granted—until it becomes a challenge, of course.

This week's announcement that hearing aids can now be sold over the counter is remarkable news. Early devices by Sony and Bose look quite promising, especially given they are well under the low end of current hearing aid pricing, making the cost a fraction of what many are paying now.

This means more people can get hearing aids that need them. As it is, many don't seek help. Like several people in my family, whom we accommodated *and* encouraged.

We are also working to upgrade the sound system in the church, including a hearing assist system that should make things easier for many.

What all of this highlights for me is just how complex hearing *actually* is. How much a speaker does to make themselves heard and understood. And how much the hearer strives to hear. We can be grateful that there are things we *can* do to make it easier.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

Autumn 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 23, 2022

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; 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 18:9-14

"Jesus told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt"

Reflection

What does it mean to trust in yourself that you are righteous?

For the second straight week, we have a gospel passage that starts by introducing the reader *to whom* Jesus is telling a parable *and why*. Last week, it was "a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart" offered to the disciples.

This one is apparently for the self-consciously righteous? And those who regard others with contempt?

ORDINARY TIME

Do we need to split these ideas off or do they go together? I suspect, we feel compelled to do the former: wanting to give each other the benefit of the doubt. I mean, just because someone thinks they are righteous, that doesn't mean they have contempt for others!

Unless, of course, that actually *is* what Jesus is saying. And it may be wise to consider that to be the case.

Jesus has made great effort throughout the gospel of Luke to describe the need to think *beyond ourselves*. Particularly when it comes to faith and participating in our world. We see this in the previous parable about the widow persisting in faith against an unjust judge: an act of defiance, not merely between two people, but between a powerless person and the powerful state.

This parable, again highlighting the different character of two people, is similarly inviting us, not to think *only* of our own lives, our own needs, and what individuals can do. But to once again *consider others*. And through that, show humility.

I am quite certain that the primary purpose of this parable is to remind us to be humble, to elevate humility, and ultimately to give context for the command to be humble.

But we cannot hope to be humble when we fail to consider that we *aren't* the center of the story. Which, I think we all understand intellectually, if not *politically*.

We can come to grips with our righteousness and sinfulness together, as people, in community. This isn't work we do alone. By ourselves. For ourselves. It is a group project. Which means acknowledging the dignity of others *and* ourselves.

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807
812.232.5165

STSTEPHENSTH.ORG
