

Sermon
St. Mary Nanoose Bay
September 3, 2017
Romans 12:9-21 & Matthew 16:21-28

Some weeks are just very, very full. Even if they are full of wonderful things, it can be overstimulating to have so much going on. I've had one of those weeks. I've had several visitors, I've accomplished more in the office than I had hoped to, and then a young family came to stay with us this weekend. So, as I mediated on the scripture readings for today, I had a hard time settling on one idea. I kept jumping from one idea to another. There's so much in these readings, as there are every week. I never am at a lack of what to say; my challenge has more to do with where to settle, where to focus.

So I'm going to try something a bit different today. I'm going to wander from one thing to another and share with you the inner workings of my mind. Maybe I should issue a warning - Haphazard turnings, unexpected stops!

I want to start with the quiet garden this week. Six of us gathered at Elaine's to spend time with God out in nature. Trefor helped us settle by suggesting ways we might spend our time. I had rushed over from the office with my mind full of unfinished tasks and I wasn't sure how open I would be to what God might have in store for me. When Trefor suggested we simply take the time to be present to the sights, smells, sounds and feelings, and ask nothing of God but focus rather on gratitude for everything we would experience, I felt the tension slide off my shoulders. In the middle of a busy week, I had permission to simply be. And for 2 hours, time I might say that simply slid by, I sat and felt the wind on my skin, the pebbles beneath me, I smelled the fragrance of a sage-type plant waft up in waves as the sun came

and went behind clouds. I heard the gabblings of the geese and the distant traffic from the highway. I wandered through the garden amazed at the activity of the insects on flowers I'd never noticed before. And when I laid down on the grass, I felt myself fall slowly and deliciously into sleep. And then the bell rang and we returned to celebrate communion. Eucharist – the great thanksgiving. And together we gave thanks for the special moments all of us enjoyed.

I came away refreshed and very relaxed. And I had a very productive afternoon at the office. I began the day thinking, “I don't know if I can really spare the time,” and I came away knowing that not only could I spare the time, I needed *to take the time* to spend with God.

I once attended a talk by my teacher Cynthia Bourgeault where she spoke about the Sabbath. And she said something that really caught my attention and has always stayed with me. She said that the sabbath is not only an external designation – like the day on which the Jews observed ritual rest – but it is a dimension – a space/time we can claim at any time. Jesus did. When he needed to, and it seemed he did frequently, he left the crowds and went into the desert, or up a mountain, to be alone with God and pray. I experienced Sabbath at Elaine's last Wednesday.

Communion – the great thanksgiving. The meal shared together. I've heard from many people what I heard my mother express after my father died - how lonely it can be to eat alone after years of sharing meals with others. Just as I don't believe we were meant to parent alone, I don't think we were meant to eat alone. Jesus always ate with others. So much of his teachings had to do with food, and/or were given while eating with others.

Our new program here at St. Mary's, starting this fall, addresses this hole in people's lives. We're calling it the Community Kitchen. It's an opportunity for people to come and cook together, share recipes and enjoy a meal together. And at the end of the meal, take home meals for the week ahead. People without full cooking facilities can come and make nutritious meals to take home; people who don't enjoy cooking can share the task with others; we'll help the Community Dinner folks by making the dessert for their monthly meal.....

Kat and I have started making lunch for each other and I'm enjoying lunch time so much more. At HUB Wednesdays, we eat together and enjoy each other's company. And once a month at the Community Dinner, we open our doors and invite the whole community in to enjoy good food in a lovely setting.

Food. Communion. Breaking bread. Together. It's easy to give thanks when we enjoy a meal together! Keep your eyes peeled for the upcoming Community Kitchen dates.

In today's reading, God calls to Moses. Through a burning bush. And requires him to take off his shoes because he is on holy ground. God then informs Moses that he has been chosen to bring his people out of slavery in Egypt into freedom.

Like most of us would, Moses says, "Who me?! Why me?" God only has the people God created to call upon. And he calls upon Moses, in this case, promising him that he will not be alone. Which is the call and promise to us all. That we all are needed and we all have the support of the God who created us and who loves us. Some of us will be called to great things in big and noticeable ways, others will be called to do great things in quiet and not-so –

noticeable ways. We are all called to love and to free each other. As Paul writes to the Romans in the letter we heard this morning: Love one with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Bless those who persecute you; rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. And if it is possible, live peaceably with all.

Holy ground. Holy callings.

So those are my wanderings for this week. Those moments when I've seen the divine things and not dwelt on or obsessed with the human things. When I've taken Sabbath moments, when I've shared meals with others, when I've trusted others with my story and when they've trusted me with theirs. That's when I glimpse holy ground.

A fellow at the coffee shop is always teasing me and egging me on. Last week he challenged me, "Let me know when you find the stairway to heaven." And I told him, "I don't know that I'll ever be able to do that, but I can tell you, I get glimpses of it all the time." Next time I see him, I'll buy him a coffee, and if he's willing, I'll tell him some of my story and hopefully hear some of his. And if he's open, I'll share some of The Story of the one who came to walk with us and save us.

"For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father." And If our eyes and hearts are open.... we get glimpses every day.

Amen.