



The Gospel isn't meant to be gulped down on Sunday morning, but gnawed on through the week so it really becomes a part of us. You've got to work at it, like a dog with a good bone!

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost: October 14, 2018
Amos 5:6-7, 10-15
Psalms 90:12-17
Hebrews 4:12-16
Mark 10:17-31

Response to Gospel

In his book "Say to This Mountain: Mark's Story of Discipleship" theologian and activist Ched Myers challenges the reader to reflect on how easily we can be 'possessed by our possessions.' He says it is a form of addiction from which we need to recover. He says one of the distinguishing characteristics of wealth is the capacity it affords us to make decisions about our lives and those of our loved ones. And that a minority of the people of the world get to make the following choices. He urges the reader to reflect on them in the context of our own lives. Have we ever had the chance to choose:

- where I will live?
 - how I will earn a living?
 - where my children will go to school?
 - what I will wear today?
 - whether I will eat today?
 - where I will eat today?
 - where I will sleep tonight?
 - whether I will heat or cool my home?
 - whether I will get medicines which have been prescribed?
 - whether I will have a telephone?
 - where I will go on holiday?
 - how I will make my home more comfortable or beautiful?
 - whether I will own a car?
 - what to do with my inheritance?
- Spend some time reflecting on your response to these questions, and on the fact that for the vast majority of people in the world these are not choices they can make. Share Quote



Camel & Needle

Is there a way you can live more ethically, sustainable and fairly in the world this week? If yes, what will you do?

Prayer

God of all power and resource
 Forgive me for being blind to my wealth
 And for living ignorant of my sense of entitlement.
 Create in me a purer heart
 One stirred to action by grace and gift
 Rather than privilege and merit.
 Heal me of my addiction
 To power and possessions
 And strengthen me to live
 the form of costly relational life
 Which brings me to the Kingdom.
 Amen



All of us 'made in the image of God'; made for relationship, to be treated equally. We are made to lift up and bless others. Take the extra step or two, be the one who reaches out to mend a broken relationship. That is the Good News of Jesus Christ, THANKS BE TO GOD.

I remember a walk along the shore of Lake Michigan,, our backdrop the straight-edge line of a powder-blue horizon toward the east, and the Chicago skyline to the south. My daughter and I [2014] had nowhere to go, and weren't in a hurry to get there. It seemed a good day for a long and restful nothing.
 At the entrance to an inviting tree-dotted and grassed area, a prominently placed sign greets

all who walk into this place of respite, rest and sanctuary with the unusual and curious caution: "**Enter at your own risk.**"

The sign stopped me. Literally. I did a double take. And I laughed. And of course, I took a picture (with my new phone -- after all, what's the point of having a new phone if you don't take photos and post them for public envy). And then it made me sad... and made me wonder, "What's the point?" Okay. At one level, I get the "risk" part. Everything now in our world is tainted with the fear of liability (or affronting). After all, someone may get hurt. (Although it doesn't read well on your medical report, "Injuries sustained while savoring the day.")

Risk becomes a double-edged sword. However, I believe that in our fear-induced world, our energy is given to casting a watchful eye to the danger always lurking (or the enemies always at bay). And we live in a world tense and on edge.

So. "Watch out!" You could be ridiculed, frightened, attacked, alarmed, injured, or worse, sued. And our life is now predicated on limiting liability. I know what that feels like. I mean viscerally. Emotionally. And spiritually. You know, when you are tempted to either bow out, or to go back to your corner and then come out fighting. Isn't it interesting what happens when we choose (or live by) that particular choice of words? When I use the lens (or perspective) -- "enter with caution"-- I instinctively see (perceive, view) my experience in a narrower or more restrictive framework. In other words, I live this moment anticipating fear. But it's not just about caution. Yes, I do understand that there are times when caution is called for. What troubles me is that more often than not, I trade in my freedom or imagination or choice or intention or unabashed delight or even my contentment, because I am certain I may offend... or that I don't deserve it,

or that I haven't earned it, or that I have colored outside the lines, and must pay the price. (Like the faithful band of "believers" in the movie *Babette's Feast* who, when offered an extraordinarily generous gift of the feast-of-a-lifetime, make the decision to "taste" the wine, but not "enjoy it.")

I don't want to live my life in fear.

We quote Thoreau, longingly, "I went into the woods because I wanted to live deliberately. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life...to put to rout all that was not life; and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." Which all sounds admirable and dauntless. But what does it mean? I'm wrestling with this... Perhaps, that is where the sign "Enter at your own risk" should be--any place we choose to live deliberately.

Because to live deliberately is risky.

And some caution is warranted.

But here's the deal: To really care, grieve, love, begin again, give birth to passion, open your heart, accept loss, be overcome by beauty, sustain friendship, sit in stillness, wrestle with prayer and faith, to speak the truth, and offer sanctuary to joy, sadness or injustice, requires a heart willing to accept the risk. To be broken wide open.



It's interesting to me that I found this sign in a place of sanctuary. That is the flip side of the coin. And the truth is; they may be right. The truth is that if I do enter a place of sanctuary, if I do practice Sabbath, or if I do honor stillness, or if I do give up my diversions to be at home in my own skin, or if I do choose the courage to be fully present, to let my soul catch up with my body, it may not be easy. It may, in fact,

be risky.

Do you want me to tell you something really subversive? "Love is everything it's cracked up to be. That's why people are so cynical about it. It really is worth fighting for, being brave for, risking everything for. And the trouble is, if you don't risk anything, you risk even more." Erica Jong

Sanctuary is replenishing. But it is so much more than that. Because we need to remember what is being replenished. **There is in every one of us the *imago dei* (the image of God).**

"Our unique divine DNA, an inner destiny as it were, an absolute core that knows the truth about you, a true believer tucked away in the cellar of your being, an *imago Dei* that begs to be allowed, to be fulfilled, and to show itself. This is your True Self or soul. Paradoxically, immense humility, not arrogance, characterizes the True Self. You simultaneously know you are a son or daughter of God, but you also know that you didn't earn it and you are not worthy of it. You know it's entirely a gift. All you can do is thank Somebody Else, occasionally weep with joy, and kneel without any hesitation. The single and true purpose of mature religion is to lead you to ever new experiences of your True Self. If religion does not do this, it is junk religion. Every sacrament, every Bible story, every church service, every sermon, every hymn, every bit of priesthood, ministry, or liturgy is for one purpose: to allow you to experience your True Self—who you are in God and who God is in you—and to live a generous and just life from that Infinite Source." (Thank you Richard Rohr)

So. Blessed are you who know deep in your bones that you are good. And beautiful. And beloved. And sacred. And worthy. And believed. And held. And capable of healing beyond your wildest imagination.

Without sanctuary, we are unmoored from the true self at our core. And we give way to a veneer that is injurious. When

we are unmoored...

...from compassion and benevolence, we give way to dismissive pettiness.

...from empathy and humanity, we give way to cruelty.

...from our capacity to give and serve, we give way to self-centeredness.

...from responsibility and ownership, we give way to blame and victimhood.

This is the great irony. "Enter at your risk" need not mean, "shut down your heart"... or restrict your life or your passion or your sorrow or your joy. It is the opposite: enter at your own risk, precisely because your heart is fully engaged, fully present, fully alive. So, take heart. Change percolates from individuals who enter.

I wish I could tell you that I have given up all my fear.

I have not.

Not yet.

But I do have a picture of that sign. Just to remind me... maybe today I will take the risk and open my heart.

Quote for your week...

Why not go out on a limb? That's where the fruit it.

-Will Rogers



The Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs
Madeleine K. Albright

Anybody read this?

There is a special place in hell for women who do not help other women.

If we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future.

Hussein has chosen to spend his money on building weapons of mass destruction and palaces for his cronies. -Madeleine K. Albright