

Friday Grind #532 'Choose Well' 5/24/26

On a few of our walks in Ireland, I would pass by congregates of sheep, with lots of new lambs. And I did my best to try to chat. Wondering if they would understand my accent.

“So. Is it okay to confess that some days I can’t focus,” I wonder aloud. “That, some days making sense of the world doesn’t work, and I just want to take a nap?”

“Not easy to admit, eh?” Their look tells me. “No, it’s not.”

I’ve always wished I had control over the world, or at least some superpower, with a stunning costume of course. But I do not. (Have the control, or the costume.)

Gandalf’s reminder is apropos and worth heeding. We don’t choose the times we live in, but it’s often the case that the times choose us, to live out our faith, our resistance, and our healing. It is seldom, if ever, fun. Or easy.

Here’s the deal: When we believe that we are “at the mercy of”, we pretend we don’t have a choice, or are along for the ride. Which means that we no longer have the energy to give to (or care about, or invest in) those things that really matter.

We, literally, lose our bearings.

Living as if reality is determined only by circumstance, and we forget that...

We have agency.

We have the capacity to make choices about what matters.

We get to say how the story ends.

So. I needed a good story. To do my heart good. And I remember the movie, *The Rider*. Once a rising star of the rodeo circuit, Brady Jandreau is warned that his competition days are over after a tragic riding accident. Now Brady finds himself wondering what he has to live for, when he can no longer do what gave him a sense of purpose: to ride, and to compete.

His life forever changed.

Brady undertakes a search for new identity and tries to redefine his idea of what it means to be a man in the heartland of America. (And fitting to the time in which we live—the strong and tough and controlling men win.)

So, Brady wondered, “What is left after macho is gone?”

In the movie, we watch his daily routines, his attempts to fit into “normal” society, his late-night hangouts with his friends and his frustrations at having to figure out his second act. (Notice that “normal” is always code for what life “should” be.)

As Brady is transformed, we watch the power of his relationship with Lane, a rodeo friend and “big brother” who was left incapacitated after a rodeo accident. And the grounding that flourishes from Brady’s empathetic and tender and vulnerable side. As it turns out, even “tough guys” can be healers. And peacemakers.

Of course, we assume life proceeds better when we’re in control.

And then, control or not, “life happens”. Go figure. And you get hurt (or disappointed or disillusioned). “You just don’t think you’ll get hurt like that,” Brady says.

These are moments that reset emotional and spiritual gravity. Everything we believe feels up in the air. Because many of our beliefs are about things working smoothly, or in a particular way. And we wonder, is this who I want to be? Am I at the mercy of life’s conundrums, or the way others see me? One lesson we take with us from Brady’s story: We need these encounters.

We benefit and grow from necessary periods of catharsis, and soul searching. Okay, maybe not to the extent of great pain.

However, such moments do invite us to ask questions about things that truly matter.

Giving up our “dreams”—you know, about the way we think life “should” be—is not

easy. But what if our dreams are not the only way to make the world a better place.

We live in a world where it is tempting to buy into an image (or role or model or persona), that carries with it certain values—to be powerful, to be impenetrable, to be bulletproof—but once given the opportunity to say “yes” or “no” to that image, we recognize that’s not who we are. And with blessing, there’s an experience in our life—a road to Damascus moment—where we can ask, “Is this who I am, and what I choose to honor?”

Where we see—and know—that as long as success is measured only by keeping score, or by being in control, it’s easy to lose track of most everything that makes us human and therefore, glad to be alive...

...small gestures of kindness.

...acts of grace--inclusion or community to someone left out, or someone on the fringes.

...extending a hand of healing (empathy, acceptance, sanctuary) to someone who hurts.

...finding and embracing your voice; knowing that silence in order to not ruffle feathers takes a toll we do not need.

(“Sending love to everyone who is trying to rediscover their voice after life made them believe that silence was safer.” Thank you, Michell C. Clark)

...saying “No” to acts of narrow-mindedness and inequality and meanness.

...resting in moments of gratitude and reveling in the gifts of the senses and being present.

...sharing laughter, a smile, camaraderie and restoration; and dancing for joy.

When one younger friend told me about life’s conundrums, I asked (the question Brady asked, the question we ask), “So what’s next?”

She replied, “I’m just waiting for God to show me what he wants from me.”

Okay. But in the meantime, you know, until

you have this life and self figured out (and straightened out), I have a suggestion: Live this day, with this self, without holding back. Today; savor, doubt, embrace, question, wrestle, give, risk, love, fall down, get up, accept your incomplete and fractured self, know that anything worth doing is worth doing badly, speak the truth from your whole heart, and whenever you can, lavish excessive compassion and mercy and healing and hope and second chances and grace and restoration and kindness on anyone who crosses your path. Who knows, we may love one another into existence. I’m sure God won’t mind.

And let us carry this prayer into our week. “Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth;

lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust;

lead me from hate to love, from war to peace.

Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe.”

(Universal Prayer for Peace, first publicly used July 1981, by Mother Teresa in St. James Anglican Church, London)

Quote ...

“Your Yes to God demands your No to all injustice, to all evil, to all lies, to all oppression and violation of the weak and the poor, to all godlessness and mocking of the holy.” -Dietrich Bonhoeffer (German Lutheran pastor, theologian, participant in the German resistance movement against Nazism)

Enjoy your Memorial Day time of leisure.