

The Rev. Dr. David K. McIntosh
June 6, 2021- 2nd Sunday After Pentecost, Proper 5B
Given at St. Mark's Church, Bridgewater

Genesis 3: 8-15; Psalm 130; 2 Cor 4:13-5:1; Mark 3:20-35

“Do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day... look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal....” †

We are now in the liturgical season sometimes referred to as “ordinary time” ... we are no longer in Easter, or Pentecost or celebrating the feast of the Trinity... we are back into the ordinary life cycle of the Church, the daily grind. It's fitting, therefore, that today's Scriptures reinforce what is remarkable and extraordinary about our so-called 'ordinary' lives as Christians.

Starting with St. Paul's beautiful reassurance to the Corinthians... reminding them that their unity in Christ, their unity with Christ, bound by the Holy Spirit, cannot be broken by death. God's Spirit is already present in us... and it will take care of us now, as well as in the future, transforming our mortal life into resurrection life. Although the Greek is very dualistic— black & white— it helps to understand that he is insisting that these 'invisible realities' are *already* present in the world and in our lives. It's a common Christian misunderstanding: to focus on suffering through this temporary life that is taking place before the second coming... assuming we just have to put up with this present inferior existence until, because of our faith, we will eventually get to live a better life with Jesus for eternity. While eternal life is a definite aspect of our faith... when does it come? That's the problem Paul's congregation had... how much longer?!

In response, Paul implies *continuity*, not radical change... a gradual process, an ongoing, life-long process of 'wasting away,' while at the same time being made 'new.'

And rather than acquiesce to this world, rather than submit to fate while we wait for the future, he encourages defiance. Paul's 'spirit of faith' is a refusal to cede to the authority of time and space, a refusal to cede to the authorities in this visible world. This reminds me of that great line from the children's book, *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint Exupery... “What is important is invisible to the eye.”

And this is exactly what Jesus promotes in the story we hear from Mark's Gospel. Jesus warns us of the false powers that captivate and get control of us, and he names them “Satan”.

In this scene, the crowds are all around Jesus, pressing at the doors and windows to be near him... and the only ones not present are his family and the scribes... the ones in authority or who are too sure of themselves & their own ways. Jesus warns us about the many “powers” and the “strong men” in our lives. He insists that they *must*

be confronted. We must all recognize and expose our strange captivity to these “strong men,” in order to experience the love of God. Thus, we must reach not for what is easily seen, but for what is hidden... Remembering his words, “people will be forgiven,” we recognize that God’s ‘invisible realities’ are present now, encouraging us to become the people we are called to be, despite our pasts.

Our ‘ordinary’ existence in this world is part of *a process* that Paul insists is possible because of our faith in Christ and through Christ...

a process of growth and transformation...

from fractured to whole...

from wounded to healed...

from ordinary to extraordinary...

from temporary to eternal.

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