

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts meet with your gracious approval, my strength, my rock, and our go to. Amen.

In our gospel for today Matthew takes us back to the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus has given instructions to the twelve disciples to be sent out as he continues a traveling and teaching ministry. At this point, early in his ministry he is not well known. Who is this new human source of wisdom and theology shaping knowledge anyway? Jesus looks to be acknowledged with neither a prestigious bloodline nor economic privilege. Jesus addresses the crowd and begins by speaking about an even more marginalized "outsider", his forerunner and cousin, John the Baptist.

John like Jesus finds himself on the outskirts of society. And like Jesus his behavior and lifestyle are in question. They are both firmly outside of the status quo, at odds with government leaders, probably law enforcement and definitely at odds with the religious leaders of the day. Many people reject these two radical voices and their call for justice. Many reject these two marginalized bodies and their cry of 'we can do better'. And still, there is a crowd that follows.

Jesus says, "Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deed." In Eugene Peterson's "The Message" he paraphrases, "Opinion polls don't count for much, do they? The proof of the pudding is in the eating."

This is the beginning of his ministry and already the people in the crowd have heard Jesus speak about anger, adultery, divorce, oaths, love for enemies, almsgiving, prayer, fasting, treasures, the Golden Rule. Those in the crowd have seen the proof. Jesus healing many at Peter's house, raise a dead girl, heal a paralyzed man, a blind man, a leper, and one who was mute.

And in the in between verses that are missing here in our lesson for today, Jesus, remember an outsider, blasts the cities where most of these healing events have taken place because the people have not repented. They refuse to change their minds and their ways. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you Bethsaida! Woe to you Bayfield, Woe to you Cornucopia. Woe to you Minneapolis. Woe to you Washington D.C.. Jesus tells them that they are all doomed.

Then as we continue our lesson for today, all of a sudden Jesus breaks into prayer. A prayer to his father, a relationship that he tells us here is completely compatible. Jesus prays, "Mother, you've concealed your ways from the people who call themselves wise or intelligent, the know-it-alls, because they aren't going to listen anyway. But the infants, the ordinary people will understand your ways, you know those who thirst for your knowledge of our mother and son operation. The infant, the ordinary will listen to our message of peace and justice for all. They are even curious about this new life that is hopeful for all people and drenched in gravy(spell check said), this new life, hopeful for all people and drenched in grace, and love. Jesus finds great joy in talking with his father.

Carla Christopher Wilson writer and ELCA Pastor writes:

Who can be trusted in this time when church leaders are bought and sold by the Empire and when there are so many different factions within a faith community called to unity generations ago? Who can we listen to? The voices we reject again and again are the bodies intimately tied to the most broken parts of a broken system. The ones who are able to speak with first-hand knowledge and able to give us stark and unvarnished truth, having lived through it with their own bodies. Chance after chance, verse after verse, we turn away from the seemingly too-simple truths spoken by underestimated outsiders.

Carla continues, when I read this passage I think of Collin Kaepernick taking a silently protesting knee and being called treasonous so our students take to the streets and are called anarchists. Two thousand years later, the dominant majority continue to craft statements and academic programs on "a way forward" while denouncing the outcry of those in, with, and shaped by the injustice we seek to resolve. No matter how a marginalized person presents themselves or what devices they use to approach those in power, deep wisdom in an unexpected package remains a gift unopened."

That is why we march, that is why white people are and need to continue to stand along side of our sisters and brothers of color.

I know some of you maybe many of you are saying, all right, already, enough Mary. We hear you, we hear you week after week preaching the same thing. The call for injustice to be uprooted and put in the compost pile and the seeds of justice to be planted and watered. You might be weary of

the message. You might be weary of hearing this message week after week. But think for just a minute of our sisters and brothers of color who have been weary, burdened, and murdered for generations, generations by our unjust systems and institutions. We all must keep marching, preaching, and teaching a message of hope, mercy and love until all feel the justice of our systems and our institutions. Like I said last week, until ALL of our lives matter, and I might add ALL of our lives and ALL of creation, we can not be silent, EVER.

Today, Jesus tells us that he can help. "Come to me", Jesus says, "come to me" not go to Moses, or go to church, or go to your favorite news channel, but "come to me". I can help. And again from The Message, "Walk with me, and work with me, I can show you how to do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace." Words to think on...."Learn- the- unforced- rhythms- of- grace."

"Come to me" How do YOU do that? There are many ways I think that we experience this humble calling of our name. Right off the bat Prayer... Meditation...Worship...Bible Study...being out in God's very own creation...come to mind. But I think there are many other times if we just can pay attention. "Come to me." Maybe "Come to me." Is the feeling of Holy Communion between two strangers, a patient, and a nurse who wets parched lips. Somebody told me this week that it was the words and melody of a hymn that they couldn't get out of their head. "Come to me. Let's do this together." Or maybe it's being in the peaceful, glowing, presence of someone who is in their last days, or weeks. "Come to me, and I will give you rest."

Many of you have seen or have had an experience with our little white, 10 pound dog, 'Bear' This was for me one of those awakening moments of real beauty and presence. Bear had been in some kind of trouble, or something or I should say someone had agitated him (namely my son Cole) and Bear hopped up on the bed and into my arms, instantly squirming to make himself comfortable in the crook of my arm, and then, letting out a huge sigh! At that moment, first I thought in my head, of myself as Bear and then I felt in my heart, what it was like to find rest in the arms of Jesus. "Come to me."

No matter what your burden, no matter what you are weary from, this pandemic, racism, on-going family conflicts, addiction, disease, loneliness,

worry, no matter what...“Come to me.” “Come to me.” Here’s my yoke, it’s easy, it will fit you. I made it the perfect size just for YOU!

I will close with two quotes:

From Hebrews:

“Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us”

“You have to open yourself up and let the pain move through you. It’s not yours to hold”. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross  
Amen