

Sermon 24.02.18

Kate Heinzl, pastor UMC

LENT 1

Psalm 25: 1-10

Leader: To you, God, I lift up my soul.
My Help, it is you I have trusted.

Response: Don't let shame overtake me.
Don't let my enemies exult over my ruin.

Leader: Do the same for all who put their hope in you.

Response: Let the betrayers fall to shame instead,
those who deceive without cause.

Leader: Your roads, God, let me know them.
Your pathways, help me recognize them from the rest.

Response: Lead me down the way of your truth;
teach me its nature.

Leader: For you are the God of my salvation.
It is you whose presence I have hoped for all day.

Response: Remember your compassion, Source of Wonder,
and your kindness,
for they have sustained the world from the beginning of time.

Leader: The error of my youth and my rebellions,
try to forget them.

Response: Remember me, in stead, by the light of your kindness -
do, God, because you are good.

Leader: You are gentle and straightforward,
guiding those who stray on the path -

Response: leading the humble to walk in justice,
teaching the willing the holy road.

Leader: All your paths are kindness and truth
to those who uphold the covenant
and bear witness to your word.

Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

OUTLINE:

Summary:

Lent, and this story of Jesus' being driven into the wilderness are both invitations to change.

Invitations to consider how we prepare the way - how we empty ourselves of that which turns our attention away from the Divine in our midst and **make room for care-full attention to what matters most.**

Invitation not quite the right word. But it implies choice. What might be a better word?

Lent - what's the most important? What needs to be put in its right place?

Today's scripture:

Jesus is blessed in a river, wanders in the wilderness
comes out and into a society filled with fear (John is in jail)

Exodus story: BY GRACE. The story starts with grace. Law comes later. Grace first.

They are brought out of the water - blessed by it.

They wander a long time, where they are told :FOCUS on what's most important
(Ex. 20:2-3) I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.
(implies they will have other gods)

Scripture:

Dripping wet he came out of the baptismal water,
heard that blessing, and with those words ringing in his ears...

... the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness

Driven out by the spirit - literally 'thrown out'. Same Spirit who descended like a dove is still actively at work.¹

Immediately - this is the first of 42 occurrences of this word in Mark's gospel

Sense of urgency. Change NOW. Decide NOW. Act NOW.

In the wilderness - what happened - tempted, with wild beasts, ministered by angels

He came to know who he was and whose he was. He was changed. Metanoia.

¹ Levine, Amy-Jill. 2023. *The Gospel of Mark: A beginners guide*. Abingdon Press. Nashville.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

In the midst of chaos - returns home. doesn't wait for life to be free of stress. Shows up in the middle.

We can be tempted to focus on what's wrong (poem: tell me about despair...I'll tell you mine)

meanwhile.. life, beautiful life goes on.

Jesus says Repent - **be changed. ARE WE WILLING TO BE CHANGED? Moment by moment choices**

perfect tense in the verbs here:

The time **has been** fulfilled, has come, and the kingdom of God **has come** near, has arrived.

Verb tense tells us of an action that was begun in the past and continues into the present.²

The kingdom is here and not yet here. We can see it; know it...and we are called to participate in it's coming.

What matters most?

STORY Bernice Johnson Reagon.³

Albany GA; music kept people fighting; kept them engaged, willing to suffer
singing transformed both the singer and the movement

Father was a pastor. No piano until age 11. First instruments: hands and feet

Singing was congregational. No soloists

when jailed - asked to sing a song. Not a solo, but to PLANT A SEED

you start a song...it's created by everyone. Singing was the bed of everything.

In that jail, and afterwards - She found a voice inside her.

SHE WAS CHANGED. METANOIA.

Holy Spirit tore open the heavens... threw him out..active - requires engagement.

Celtic: goose symbol of Holy Spirit. Our poem (read from meanwhile the wild geese...)

Jesus calls, like the wild geese, like the Spirit - calls us to change.

Bernice Johnson Reagon- the kingdom was there, and not yet there.

in our lives - when is the kingdom here, for a moment? We know when it's not here.

Our work this lenten season? (Bulletin cover) ***Broadening our hearts (CHANGING) and preparing the way, making room for care-full attention to what matters most.***

² Keenan, John P. 1995. *The Gospel of Mark*. Orbis books, Maryknoll, NY. p 61 footnote #32.

³ Williams, Juan. 2013. *Eyes on the Prize: America's civil rights years 1954-1965*. Penguin books.