



Prayer Concerns: Vince Anderson in the passing of his mother; Vira Cogswell

Today's Sanctuary flowers are provided by the flower committee to the glory of God.

Today's choral selections are provided by the Temple Choir under the direction of Joan Nevill. Organist: Barbara Waite.

Ushers January 21: Eric Eades, captains; Seby Durgy, Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley

Ushers January 28: Eric Eades, captain; Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley

Greeters January 21: Rosemary Warren Heinsohn, John Oberhelman, Lila Allen

Greeters January 28: Sue & Cle Watson, Tom Harvey, Mary Lockett

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

Congregational Hymns

WELCOME

PRELUDE

"If Thou But Suffer God To Guide Thee. Theme, Variations 1,3,4" by G. Boehm

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: We gather here as an act of faith.

People: We have faith that God is with all people. We have faith that God loves all people.

Leader: God's love is perfect and rich in mercy.

People: May we have the courage to receive it.

CHORAL INTROIT #328

"Surely the Presence of the Lord"

*CHIMES & SERVICES OF LIGHT

*HYMN #139

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Please turn to those around you and pass the peace of Christ.

SPECIAL MUSIC

"God Is Light" by Carol Kelley

CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us pray as one.

PASTORAL PRAYER

All: God of love and life, in this moment of prayer, be more and more with us, that we might live more and more in You.

Hear us now as we pray, each in our own hearts and our own ways...

LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13 "Pray then like this: 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'"

GIVING TITHES & OFFERING

If Thou But Suffer God To Guide Thee. Variations 5,6. G. Boehm

*DOXOLOGY *The congregation stands as the Ushers return the offering to the Altar.*

#95 in Hymnal

ANTHEM

"On Eagles Wings" by Jonas/Ferguson

KIDZ MOMENT

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Luke 13:1-5

Repent or Perish

13 At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? 3 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. 4 Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

FAITH WE SING #2086

"Open Our Eyes"

MESSAGE by Pastor Andy Payton

"Broken"

Our gospel lesson this morning comes from the Gospel of Luke Chapter 13. Before we read it though I want to say thank you to Maggie for being our liturgist today. She has done a wonderful job. Maggie, of course, is our Children's Director. She's standing in for JillAnn who is on vacation this week. So let's give Maggie a hand for standing in.

Our Gospel lesson today is from Luke 13. Would You stand with me for the the Gospel. At that time- at that very time, there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilot had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than other Galileans? No I tell you but unless you repent you will all perish as they did or those 18 who were killed with Tower of Saloam when it fell on them. Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the other living in Jerusalem No I tell you but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did. Friends this is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

It all began a week ago Friday. Baby Ella was sick. Then next Paige became sick. By Friday afternoon I began to tell my wife Leslie that I didn't feel very good- at which point she told me, 'Andy you're just being a baby. Get over it.'

She went on to say how about this Andy go get some pizza, so I went and got some pizza and then I ate a piece of pizza. And then I told Leslie, now I really don't feel good. Twenty minutes later the fireworks began. Needless to say...

I have to say though it is good to be back with you. I'm so grateful to be back with you at this place today and not be where I was this past weekend. I'm thankful that my family is flu free this weekend. Makes things move a lot smoother I must say. Last couple of weeks we've been talking about the beloved. We've been basing our sermon series on Henry Nowen's book Life of the Beloved. And we've been talking about what does it mean to live our lives as the beloved children of God. We talked about the idea that we are taken as God's children which is to say that we are chosen by God. Every one of us is unique which means every one of us has been given a sense and a piece of God's presence in a unique way. Next we talked about being blessed which blessing is not just the good things that happen in our life, but the blessing fundamentally is that God values us deeply- each and every one of us today our theme is broken. And unfortunately I have to say that it seems to me that sometimes the brokenness well sometimes the brokenness feels like the most real thing about our lives in this world. Which is what makes it so, I suppose, applicable today.

Would you pray with me. Help us be present to you today, oh God, even as you are here present with us. I ask that you would take the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts and that you would make them to be acceptable to your sight.

In the name of our scripture lesson this morning tells the story of two tragedies. The first tragedy seems to be a moment where the governor Pilot executes a group of people while they are worshipping. That's the first- where it talks about Pilot mingling the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices. It seems the governor- the Roman governor Pilot- executed a group of people while they were worshipping for whatever reason.

The next tragedy is the story of a tower which falls and kills 18 people. It seems that the disciples and Jesus are kind of reflecting on these two tragic moments, and it is into this questioning that Jesus poses another question: He says, "Well do you think that they are somehow worse sinners than you to have these things happen?"

And then Je goes on and He says, "I tell you unless you repent people perish just as they did." These are some harsh words and I have to say when I read these verses years ago, I quite frankly didn't know what to do with them didn't know how to apply them didn't know how to preach on them. But as I've thought about these verses this week, it seems to me that Jesus is saying this he is questioning the idea that the great suffering of this world is somehow caused by the great sinning of the victims. In other words the reason why tragedies happen is because God is somehow punishing people for their actions. Jesus is challenging this idea. He's saying it's not true. Instead, what he says to his disciples is that in these moments of brokenness and tragedy, the question is not why that happened but the question is that it happened. Ae we allowing the brokenness of these situations to teach us to love? Are we allowing our hearts to break with the people who have been think about this way?

This past week up in reading a book called The Sacrament of the Present Moment, it's written by a Jesuit Priest in the eighteenth century. I can't really say his name so I'm not going to even try my Loogotee would kick in and you won't even understand what I say. But he's French. Doug would have to help me with it- the French teacher. But the book suggests a really interesting idea that I've been ruminating on all week. The author the priest says that each moment is given to us as a word from God. And it's meant to be interpreted no less than scripture. Each moment is given to us as a word from God. And it's meant to be interpreted no less than now we apply this to our own mindset and what we find is that there are good things that happen to us. There are bad things that happen to us. Each of these moments are opportunities for us to discern the spiritual meaning of what happened and allow our hearts to be transformed by the experiences that we have. Henri Nowen and probably said it best when he noted that ultimately it's the victims of this world. That have been chosen to be the bearers of God's good news stops. What he means by that is, it is the broken people of this world that God sends into our lives in order that our hearts might be broken for the and they might teach us to love.

He goes on to tell the story of a visiting HIV AIDS victims in the late 1980s in the early 1990s. If you're alive during this time you remember the phobia and the scare that would along with HIV and AIDS. We were just petrified of the disease. He tells the story of going to visit these folks during this time. I have to say that in doing so he exhibited it found him out of courage. I can remember how scared even I was as a kid of HIV and AIDS. I remember even the time I was eating french fries and McDonald's and I dropped the French fry on the table and the person that was with me told me don't eat that French Fries because the person who sat here before us might have AIDS. That's how scared we were of this disease, and yet Henri Nowen goes and sees these people suffering from AIDS which is all but a death sentence for them. He goes and touches them; he holds their hand. He loves them and as he tells the story, he knows how desperately these people just wanted someone to embrace and how in embracing, his heart was transformed by their brokenness.

As I think about my own life, one of these moments in which my heart was transformed by brokenness was when I took a group of people down to Katrina. After it all went down and after the hurricane hit, I remembered that some preachers were saying that well the reason why Katrina happened was because it was somehow God's punishment upon the city of New Orleans for its sin. I remember that. But if you know anything about Katrina, the funny thing is the hurricane really didn't damage the party section of town. Bourbon Street was fine. It went right around it into the poorer areas of New Orleans. We were assigned though elderly lady who'd lost everything. She was rescued literally from the rooftop of her house. Our job was to gut the house. We had a tear down the cinderblock. We had to get rid of the furniture. The moment that touched me the most was when we were taking out the clothes from the closet. There were moldy. They couldn't be used. They had to go. But the thing is, she began to weep when we began to carry the clothes of her deceased husband out the door. And that moment in that moment my heart broke with her. There was no explanation to be given. There was nothing to be said. All I could do was put my hand on her shoulder. It was a moment dare I say conversion and once my heart has changed. That's her heart.

It seems to me religion can be used in two different ways. Some of us can use religion as an excuse to keep the broken and the victims of this world at arm's length. We can come up from every excuse why we shouldn't help them. Or religion can be used to challenge us to find the brokenness. In fact the word religion goes back to the Latin word which literally means 'to bind'. Dare I say that to be truly faithful to our religion, it means that we allow it to challenge us to allow our hearts to be transformed broken if you will by the brokenness of this world. And so the question becomes how do we live our lives in this way in which our hearts are open to the pain of others.

How do we live our lives in this way in which our hearts are touched by the tragedy in other people's lives? And what I would suggest to you that are really quite simply three very simple things. First, if we're going to allow our hearts to be transformed by the brokenness of others, it means we have to let go of our judgments and our constant evaluations about why it happened nor do they get what they deserve or any of these kinds of things that we do whenever pain hits someone else's life. One simple way I think we can figure out too or one simple way we can let go of our judgments is to remember that the brokenness of religion is entirely meant to them. Let me say again, one way we can let go of the judgments and the evaluations of other people's pain is to remember that the brokenness of other people is entirely unique to them. Each and every one of us is broken in our entirely unique way- just as every person is different, every one of our brokenness is also different. Second we must let go of the judgments, and we must be willing to embrace the pain can't run from it. We have to be willing to embrace it, carry the cross as Jesus would say. And the way that we know that we truly embrace the pain of other people is eventually it ricochets back, and it teaches us to embrace our own pain and our own brokenness. To be clear when I say embrace the pain and embrace the pain of our own lives, I'm not saying that simply by embracing it it just goes away. I'm not saying that at all. To be clear we don't really get over a lot of the pain in our lives. We just learn to live with it. A friend of mine once told me this: that it's not that we ever get over grief, it's just that we learn to live with it. Another person said that this: we don't cast out our demons, we just learn to live above them. That's helpful to me to realize that embracing the pain doesn't make it go away.

So how do we live above our pain? That's the heart of the question right. How do we respond to our pain? What I would suggest to you this morning is this: you have to be willing to pull it out of the dark and bring it into the light of God. You have to be willing to pull it out of the darkness and put it under the light of God's blessing. Which means quite frankly we accept our pain and our brokenness our chips and our mess as a part of who we are. Just as many blessings make us who we are, the many things that have inflicted pain within our lives also make us who we are. And they prepare us and they teach us to give ourselves to other people.

I guess in the end we can know that we've embraced our pain when we've learned to be, dare I say grateful for it. I remember as a young boy telling my own story about how I became a Christian and I did some things that I'm not proud of and went through some experiences that I would soon forget. But as I told these stories inevitably some of the more I don't know how I say straight line type Christians would come up to me and say oh I'm so sorry so sorry that you experienced these things. To which ever respond that makes me who I am. I'm a beloved child of God with blessings and brokenness. One person who taught me how to live more than anybody else probably Archbishop Desmond Tutu a couple of years ago when we went and visited South Africa a group of us pastors. The highlight of my trip in South Africa was worshipping with Archbishop Desmond Tutu. You know the story of South Africa. Bishop Tutu was one of the forerunners of the resistance against the apartheid government. He is a rock star in my opinion. This man has more courage than any person I think in the world right now. If you consider his story, he literally stood against a government that killed thousands of people. He stood against. And the thing that strikes me about Tutu more than anything else is, as he went through deep brokenness and profound suffering, he never allowed it to steal his joy. He kept his joy through it. And it's an infectious joy. He's got this laugh and it is just contagious. I think what enabled him to keep his joy in the midst of all the brokenness though was his deep belief that as a Christian that the light of God is more real than any darkness or pain that the world will ever see. The day that we were in South Africa in Cape Town, Archbishop Tutu did preside over the worship services; and he was dying- or I guess he still dying- of pancreatic cancer. That day he could barely stand. But I remember the help of a man to bring him up the stairs. He had to have help sitting down. He had to have help standing back up. But I remember the point in which it came time for him to give his homily. He gave it a two sentence homily and it was probably one of the best sermons I've ever heard. He leaned up against the wall. We looked at us all and he said thank you thank you thank you for you being here today on my birthday. As he gathered himself he looked at the wall. He looked at and gave us his second. He says 'All I hope for you is that you would find the light and the joy of God' With that said, it came time for communion. And we all got in line and we were going forward. And I was so caught up in the moment- I mean I was fighting back tears. I was so caught up in the moment when it finally became time for me to give my bread- the body of Christ, the lady put it in my hand and I just kind of froze and didn't know what to do. Finally the lady broke the awkward bread and she says 'just what do you think you're going to do with that friend' and I walked away as I ate the bread and I thought to myself that's a metaphor for our entire lives. Just what are we going to do with the bread, the life that we've been giving. I suppose I might add one thing to it just what are we going to do with the bread we've been given when it's been broken. We choose to see God's presence in it.

*HYMN #378

"Amazing Grace"

*CHIMES & SERVICE OF LIGHT

BENEDICTION