

**Are you the One? 2-12-17**

*We are not puppets....*

Mechanically going through life,  
Accepting commands, requests, and offers dutifully  
and responding in kind.

We are created To **Reason**. To **question**. To **wonder**.  
And, to seek answers to what we wonder about.

One of the many ways I engage with our confirmands  
is to ask them to keep notes during worship.

I give them direction for doing this.

They look at the primary text for the week  
and answer questions based on the particular gospel lesson.

In the two months between Christmas and Ash Wednesday  
we have been learning about Jesus' ministry  
so our middle schoolers are being asked to wonder:

- who the key characters are,
- how God is creating, saving, helping, walking with,  
or giving comfort in the story
- and, to describe the good news in the gospel lesson.

Last Sunday I shared the ways those who saw Jesus teach and heal  
were responding to his **Way and Truth**.

*A Roman centurion, village elders, and **the crowd following Jesus**.*

And, I wondered to you, how you respond when you see miracles?,  
when you witness others loving people?

**Acting Faithfully.**

*Do you respond in kind? **loving others yourself?***

**even if they seem different than you?**

@@@@@

*In the first 7 chapters of Luke's gospel,*  
its author is building a case for who Jesus is...  
He shares story after story to engage us **in that effort,**  
To capture our hearts and minds,  
just as those who were there in Galilee  
*became riveted with the person of Jesus...*  
what he was saying... and doing.

**You have faith. But, maybe, deep down you still wonder**  
*... still have questions, about God.*  
*... 'Deep down in your gut' questions you rarely voice -*  
**to family, or to God.**

@@@@@

*It takes a great deal of trust to ask life's deepest questions.*  
**We don't want to risk**  
**losing what we've taken a lifetime to build...**  
And so, as we often do in other aspects of our lives  
**we continue to walk on -- just going through the motions.**

Our confirmands have been doing this, too in a way—  
completing their worship notes since last September –  
but rarely providing the open-ended question  
at the end of the worship note, which is:

*What is one question you have about the bible, faith, or living as  
a disciple of Christ?*

Questions they have asked  
have usually come from their heads, not their hearts.

**But in the last few weeks there's has been a sea change,**  
We've broken a boundary, so to speak  
– crossed an invisible threshold.

Listen to just a few responses from our 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders to “What is the good news you heard in the sermon and what question do you have” that I’ve received since Christmas:

- *What is the good news?* God’s grace is not only for us and people similar to us, but for everyone. We should accept this and carry God’s light in any way we can.  
*Question: When sharing God’s grace, are we supposed to walk away when rejected like Jesus did, or keep going?*
- *What is the good news?* No matter how impossible the task is, God can always do it.  
*Question: What should you do if a prayer that has been asked for decades is not answered?*
- *What is the good news?* Jesus is going to teach Simon how to catch people. *Question: Where are they going to go?*
- *What is the good news?* God is with us and in us. *Question: How can we declare good news from our mouths when he is more powerful than us?*
- *What is the good news?* Jesus and God will always be there.  
*Question: Why isn’t God there for everyone’s beckon call? Is there too many people?*
- The Good News will always be alive through or not through scripture. *Question: How can we tell the difference between God’s voice and the devil’s voice?*

@@@@@

We can imagine that many in the crowds following Jesus had questions too... **Deep questions like those I just shared**

Humans have always been wired to wonder.

*We’ve sent emissaries or spies if we aren’t able to **see for ourselves.***

*Centuries before, as God’s chosen stood on the **far side of the Jordan***

**Joshua wondered** about the land God had promised.

*He sent two spies to look over the land, especially Jericho.*

None of them had ever been there,  
they didn't have access to a map  
much less Google Earth to tell them what to expect.  
*The spies returned with detailed information about what they saw.*

It should be no surprise that Herod and others  
Have placed spies in the crowds following Jesus...  
To gauge the crowd's reaction  
& **collect evidence against him.**

*Now Luke tells us there have been spies of a different sort*  
in their midst too.

These followers of John the Baptist  
have witnessed Jesus' teaching, his *being grilled* by the Pharisees,  
his healing on the Sabbath and **raising someone from death.**

After recounting all they have seen to their Master  
who sits imprisoned by King Herod,  
they return to Jesus, approach him face to face  
and **directly ask a question on John's behalf.**

A question that has been begged in every story since his baptism.  
**Are you the one? Or should we be seeking someone else?**  
**In other words, are you the real deal?**

In so many ways,  
this is the crux of our confirmands deepest questions,  
**and our own.**

**Is Jesus the one?**  
**The one to trust, to honor, to follow?**

Jesus' response to the crowd <<<and to us>>> **is pointed.**  
**What do you see?** he says... I am who I am.

*Had John been thinking like many others?*

That the Messiah would come  
to overthrow the current evil Roman regime?  
Herod's corrupt puppet government?  
The ever more exclusive religious leaders?

*If that was the case – as Yale scholar Mical Dinkler wonders,  
Then how come Jesus isn't getting to the point?*

Where was Judge Jesus' winnowing fork?  
Why wasn't the wicked chaff disappearing with the wind?

Instead, Herod, with his ungodly lifestyle and despicable court  
Remains in charge... puppets of Caesar,  
whose regime seems there to stay.

@@@@@

John the Baptist has a **blind spot**.  
And it's more than his being locked out of sight in prison.

In answer to his question Jesus simply says –  
**What you see, dear friend, – is what you get.**

Jesus came not to save the world from Herod or the Romans.  
<<But to save us from ourselves.>>

... to give us life beyond our physical ailments,  
... life that resists self-motivated temptations  
toward power, riches, and self-centeredness.  
And to teach us that the broken world  
and our own brokenness, will always be with us –  
but **it doesn't have to defeat us.**

*Until we can lay down our own burdens,  
Recognize our **blind spots**, and our **deafness to the Truth...**  
*Until we can turn to Jesus in times of grief and uncertainty,**

Until we pick up the cross and follow our Master  
*What God has to offer will never be enough --*  
**We will always question.** And we will not be transformed.

When we put our total trust in Jesus...

**We are transformed.**

We receive *life* and purpose  
rather than living a life of futility, *guilt*, shame or **bitterness.**

We can live in love and *with hope*,  
even in the midst of corruption and **a sense of hopelessness.**

@@@@@

Dwelling with God, realizing what we have...  
and the many ways each of us has been blessed,  
*in the midst of wondering* and painful surprises  
is **the key**  
to finding **the peace Jesus promised.**

*John needed to know* the answer to his question **to find that peace.**  
**So do we.**

So I will say to you plainly.  
Jesus is the real deal. Believe it.

Ask for the faith to believe this is true.  
And, believe.  
You have the ability to choose life, love and hope  
Regardless of what you face.

Reach beyond the wondering ..... and Trust. AMEN