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 September 1 2019
Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 17)



Lectionary citations:

Jeremiah 2:4-13 with Psalm 81:1, 10-16 or
Sirach 10:12-18 with Psalm 112
Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16
Luke 14:1, 7-14

On an occasion I was leading a workshop on the story Moses and the Burning Bush. I asked the group to consider two questions. What is burning in you that is consuming you? And, what is burning in you that is sustaining you? A black man in the audience pushed back against the frame of the questions arguing that some people must carry unfair and unsustainable burdens in the struggle for justice and inclusion while others get choices on whether to be involved or not. I was shocked and realised that even the way I had shaped these questions revealed the privilege I enjoy. I had the power to choose to remain silent in the face of injustice. Where do you see unearned privilege at work in your world today? Are you aware of any privilege you benefit from but didn't work for? Who or what created and sustains this situation?

Desmond Tutu, 21st century
 "A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed."

Brené Brown, 21st century
 "Those who have a strong sense of love and belonging have the courage to be imperfect."

Jesse Brown, 21st century
 "Eating, and hospitality in general, is a communion, and any meal worth attending by yourself is improved by the multiples of those with whom it is shared."

Letty M. Russell, 20th century
 "Hospitality is the practice of God's welcome by reaching across difference to participate in God's actions bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis."



Did someone go through our world and change the price tags that determine what we value? And what grounds us? It feels that way to me. In conversations and email, I hear two consistent themes; depletion (from overload, distraction and hurry) and disconnect (diminished trust from fear and projection). The cacophony in our world is loud. And if we're at all insecure about our status, we are susceptible to (blinded by) public opinion, social media pressure and mob mentality. Bluntly, we lose our way. Okay, I'll personalize this; I

lose my way. And here's how I know; when I demean, exclude, diminish, withhold mercy or withhold empathy (from others or myself) I lose my way. So. Here's the deal: We need to pause. It is necessary to "quiet the internal noise," in order to hear the gentle lessons of the heart and stories about sufficiency, not scarcity.

In a national magazine, an ad for the Humane Society minced no words. Above an adorable puppy and kitten, the ad read, "It's who owns them that makes them important." Our wellbeing, is about who or what, owns us. The good news is this; when we lose our way, our authentic self is not gone. It's just been unembraced, and marginalized. There is a bad car accident on a busy street. A woman, from one of the vehicles, lay in the street, in need of medical assistance. A young woman bends over the body. A man rushes over. "Move away please," he tells the woman. "I've had CPR training. Let me handle this." He pulls out his training manual. After a minute, the young woman taps him on the shoulder and says, "When you get to the part about calling a doctor, I'm already here." That'll preach. In Parker Palmer's words, "Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic selfhood. As we do so, we will find our path of authentic service in the world." So. Let us wade in, returning to the truth of who we are (you know, the one already here),

and to the light we can spill.
To live fully into the self I've
been given, an authentic self
not gummed up with so many
limiting stories.

And Lord, it took me back to
something that I'd lost
Somewhere, somehow along
the way.

Kris Kristofferson, Sunday
Morning Coming Down
Mother Teresa once told a
roomful of lepers how much
God loved them. She
told them that they are "a gift
to the rest of us."
Interrupting her, an old leper
raises his hand, and she calls
on him. "Could you repeat
that again?" he asks. "It did
me good. So, would you mind;
just saying it again."

Yes please. Just say it again.
I love the title of Tim O'Brien's
book, *The Things They
Carried* (about a group of
soldiers in Vietnam). The title
fits what we're asking today,
What do we carry as
reminders in order to sustain,
replenish and nourish, and
not lose our way?
On my desk is a medicine
pouch. A gift from a Native
American friend. When the
Shawnee and Chippewa (and
other early people) went on
hunts or vision quests or long
journeys, each traveler would
carry in a small
rawhide pouch various tokens
of spiritual power--perhaps a
feather, a bit of fur, a claw, a
carved root, a pinch
of tobacco, a pebble or a shell.
These were not simply magical
charms; they were reminders
of the energies that sustain all
of life. By gathering these
talismans into
a medicine pouch, the hunter,
traveler, or visionary seeker
was recollecting the sources of
healing and bounty and

beauty.

All of it marinated, by the way,
in an elixir of humor. Because
I do know this; if my pouch is
filled with a need for control
and answers, I lose
lightheartedness, and can
easily be seized with
frustration, fear, panic, rage,
despair, depression and
exasperation. (You get the
picture?) Let's just call it
heatstroke of the heart.

But what if? What if... the
"tokens" in that pouch are not
a magic wand to undo life, but
instead, the power and the
freedom to embrace the life
we have been given and to
create life for those around
us?
What if... wired to care, we see
in this life, this day, even in
the very muddle of the
ordinary, even in the very
chaos, the permission to trust
our sufficiency, embrace our
wounds as they become sacred
wounds, and become places of
empathy, compassion,
healing? Because grace is alive
and well.

"Spirituality means waking
up." (Anthony de Mello
reminds us.) To the power of
the present moment. There is
no doubt that waking up isn't
always cheerful. Or easy. It is,
however, worth it.
Because wholehearted people
live present, susceptible to
tenderness and mercy, human
touch and healing.

Yes please, Just say it again.
Here's why my medicine pouch
resonates; I need something
visceral, incarnational,
liturgical. I am, literally,
grounded.

We cut ourselves little slack.
Because we need invitations to
marinate in grace. To
remember that the sacred is
close by. To see life in fullness,

hopefulness, wonder,
gratitude, beauty, silence,
prayer, connection and
sufficiency. And from this
marinade of grace, we
embrace our humanity and all
that enriches it; empathy,
tenderness, inclusion,
forgiveness. We let ourselves
spill the light we receive, we
give, offer, hold, touch, care,
soothe, empathize and invite
sanctuary.

What's in your medicine
pouch this week?

I'm off to the airport later this
evening, to Cincinnati, to
spend the week with the good
people at Franciscan Media.
We're recording the audio
book for *This Is the Life:
Mindfulness, Finding Grace,
and the Power of the Present
Moment*. It's my new book,
due out October 14. I'm
honored to work with them.
Stay tuned. (There's a big
smile on my face in case you
couldn't tell.)

This afternoon I'm in the
garden. Tomatoes off the vine
and cucumbers and onions,
for a wee salad with lunch.
It's back to school week for
many. Which means respite
for parents.

Quote for your week...

Do not be dismayed by the
brokenness of the world. All
things break. And all things
can be mended. Not with
time, as they say, but with
intention. So go. Love
intentionally, extravagantly,
unconditionally. The broken
world waits in darkness for
the light that is you.

-L.R. Knost

LABOR DAY BLESSINGS

Enjoy the weekend.