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Jeremiah 8:18-9:1 with Psalm 79:1-9 or

Amos 8:4-7 with Psalm 113

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Luke 16:1-13

The above are the readings for Sunday, September 22. You might want to make time to read them prior to attending worship.

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I'll go with Mr. Rogers on this one. "It's not so much what we have in this life that matters. It's what we do with what we have. The alphabet is fine, but it's what we do with it that matters most. Making words like 'friend' and 'love'. That's what really matters."

An all-star quarterback retired recently. Andrew Luck is 29. Which means, too young to retire. Because of years of chronic pain, he made the decision based on priorities other than his job; health, family and joy.

He was booed by fans, and second guessed by pundits. His choice didn't fit neatly into who he was: a sports hero. Someone like him wasn't supposed to be hurting so much.

His decision "let us down", we are told. So, I wonder, how do we find the courage to choose what really matters?

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most. Making words like 'friend' and 'love'. That's what really matters." (We could use more of Mr. Rogers in this world. Just sayin'.)

I'm not a pro QB or pro anything, although as a boy our son dreamt of being the next Bart Starr. What I do know is that each week I'm more aware of why struggles (anger or tears or sadness cropping up when I least expect them) make choices about what matters difficult. This is no surprise, with all the competing and conflicting bombasts in our world. I forget (or lose track) of the integrity of my inner Voice (what Marilyn Robinson called the reservoir of goodness).

As the old man walks the beach at dawn, he notices a young man picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Catching up to the youth, he asks a simple question, "Why are you doing this?"

The boy answers that the stranded starfish would die if left until the morning sun.

"But the beach goes on for miles, and there are millions of starfish. How can your efforts make any difference?"

The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and threw it to safety—into the ocean past the breaking waves. "It makes a difference to this one," he said.

I don't know what your emotional wellbeing thermostat reads. I do know that when I'm tired or worn down, I'm susceptible to disheartenment and

discombobulation (compounded by a dose of guilt that I should know better than to give in to melancholy). Well, this week, I gave that inner-bully a time out.

We can make choices that matter, that make a difference.

To this day. This encounter. This conversation.

So, this week, what really matters for you? Our lists don't need to be exhaustive. This isn't a contest. Just a good place to begin.

Here's mine. This week I choose;

Kindness

Rear Admiral Thornton Miller Chief was the Chaplain at Normandy in WWII. Someone asked him, "Up and down the beach, with the shells going everywhere, why did you do that?"

"Because I'm a minister."

"But didn't you ask if they were Catholic or Protestant or Jew?"

"If you're a minister, the only question you ask is, 'Can I help you?'"

Four simple words. And, in our broken world, that's a good place to begin.

Here's the deal: the love of God transcends and transforms what the world imposes upon us in fear, and our own sense of helplessness. That love is carried by kindness. It's not my desire to convert anyone. Just to remind everyone that, "Transformed people transform people." (Richard Rohr)

Connection

This from Fredrik Backman's *Every day the way home gets longer* (a conversation between Noah and his Grandpa).

We have to write essays all the time! The teacher wanted us to write what we thought the meaning of life was once. What did you write?

Company.

Grandpa closes his eyes.

That's the best answer I've heard.

My teacher said I had to write a longer answer.

So what did you do?

I wrote: Company. And ice cream.

Grandpa spends a moment or two thinking that over. Then he asks: what kind of ice cream?

Noah smiles. It's nice to be understood.

No one of us is on this journey alone. And life without community (company) is anxious and unsatisfying, leaving an emptiness no purchase or accomplishment can fill.

The sacrament of the present. leads us to connectedness.

Mary Oliver told us that "attention is the beginning of devotion," which invites listening, and a new way of presence in our world. (Brené Brown talks about presence not as what's possible between people, but "what's true between people.")

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Reflection on the Readings this week are coming slowly as it's been a week of appreciation of seeing community in action and in prayer. Breaking Bread surrounded by friends and family says it all. Nobody does this thing called life alone. Once more a life well lived deserves acclamation.

Meeting baby Benjamin Matthew was wonderful: only four months of age, pretty

much on a schedule already and the proud parents and grandparents are excited about Baptism to be celebrated soon.

Fall arrives, the leaves are turning, evenings and mornings are cool. Life is to live and share. Enjoy. Blessings to all. KatieD