

ORDINARY TIME – 2nd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

RECOLLECTING OURSELVES FOR WORSHIP

Music (please use this time for quiet and reflection)

Gong [followed by silence]

Call to Worship

Hymn – 269 [O God of Bethel, by Whose Hand]

Opening Prayer

OUR HUMANNES AND GOD'S GRACE

Call to Confession

Unison Prayer of Confession

Gracious God, I have internalized the concept of growth that pervades my culture where I set goals and work to achieve them, including overcoming any resistance in me to attaining them. There are parts of the life I live in the external world where this approach is beneficial. I, however, apply the same approach to my internal life, something which turns out to be detrimental. My focus on having the interior life I want, where I only feel what I already value, has the effect of reducing my life to familiar routines which make my life narrow. This focus keeps me from acknowledging and considering the thoughts and feelings you bring me in an attempt to make my life rich and deep and more enlivening. The cost to me of being receptive to you is that I relinquish control over the way my interior life unfolds, something which makes me uneasy. The value to me of being receptive to you lies in the relief that comes when I no longer carry the weight of the way my interior life turns out, and the calm that descends upon me when I learn to relax into your timetable for the unfolding of my life.

Personal Prayer of Confession in Silence

Assurance of Pardon

LISTENING FOR THE WORD OF GOD

Story for the Children

Scripture – Luke 8:26-39

Prompting

Silence and Reflection

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Hymn – 380 [O Christ, the Healer]

Announcements

Minute for Mission

Our Gifts and Offerings

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Christ all creatures here below;

Praise Holy Spirit, Comforter;

One God, Triune, whom we adore. Amen.

The Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us in the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and forever. Amen.

GOING OUT – to serve, to journey, to live the word

Hymn – 270 [O God, in a Mysterious Way]

Charge and Benediction

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

TODAY	10:00	Worship and Church School
	11:00	Coffee and Fellowship
	11:20	Conversation
MONDAY	1:30	Presbyterian Women

Lectionary Readings from Cycle C for June 30, 2019

II Kings 2:1-2, 6-14; Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20;
Galatians 5:1, 13-25; Luke 9:51-62.

F.Y.I.

The Presbyterian Women meet tomorrow, Monday, June 24th, at Olwen's home, at 1:30pm. The lesson is #9. Pam Novelly is the leader. Karen Kessel is the hostess.

Next Sunday we will celebrate the Lord's Supper and will receive a Deacons offering.

Faith Presbyterian Church, 190 Arlen Dr., Rohnert Park CA 94928

Church Office: 707-795-6620

Our web site is <www.faithpresbyterianrp.org>

Elders: Marolyn Bode, Mary Jane Beccaria, Karen Kessel.

Deacons: Richard Egan, Esha Egan, Wanjiru Muthamia.

Clerk of Session: Karen Kessel: [H] 707-664-8450.

Pastor: Jim Robie: [C] 707-291-8489; jimrobie2@gmail.com

Ordinary Time, 2nd Sunday after Pentecost (Luke 8:26-39)

What is highlighted in the Ordinary Time after Pentecost is the work God does to help us assimilate and integrate what has been disclosed to us about ourselves during the times in life we label as Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. During the Ordinary Time that comes at the end of these seasons, we focus on the aspect of God labeled Holy Spirit, which refers to the work God does of helping us remember what we have learned and discovering how to put it to use in our living.

During this Ordinary Time this text is offered, a text which serves as a reminder that what happens in this time is not about the enhancement of our ego according to the ego ideals we acquired in our youth, but is concerned with the emergence of a sense of self that we would not be able to assemble on our own because what emerges is more real and less ideal than we would entertain. What emerges involves the amalgamation of both the elements of our personality we have begun to value, and the resistance in us against moving toward them, something that happens by our being taught to value both.

Our culture's image for personal development and growth is one of an athlete that persistently trains and breaks through barriers in order to perform optimally. In Christian spirituality the image is different. It is one of being humbled by our inability to attain an ideal, an inability created by something within us which resists the ideal in favor of some value we consider inferior. In pursuit of justice, i.e. equitable and fair treatment for all the elements of our personality, God helps us value both the ideal and the resistance to that ideal so that both can be integrated into our sense of self. The experience that comes from this amalgamation is not jubilation at the achieving of a goal, but the quiet experience of being subdued by the realization that we are as conflicted as we are. What allows this experience to be embraced is the accompanying realization that we are acceptable to God being conflicted, plus the relief that comes from surrendering to the way God will assemble a self that is beyond our ability to imagine. This relief is the emotion that parallels the jubilation that comes to those whose lives are lived in training for optimal performance. To those training for optimal performance, this more integrated way of life seems foolish. The wisdom in this more integrated way of living becomes apparent as we learn to rest in God's design for and timing of the unfolding of our identity.

[Jim Robie, 6-21-19]

Ordinary Time – 2nd Sunday after Pentecost (Luke 8:26-39)

In this text the Greek word for “demon” refers to “a daemonic being,” and comes from a root meaning “a daemon or supernatural spirit [of a bad nature].” How would we talk about this reality? In English, the word “demon” comes from a root “to divide,” or “a divider.” We would define a demon as a frame of mind or state of mind that is divided from, split-off from, our dominant personality, lives outside of our awareness, and operates independently from our dominant personality. Because we do not understand what this split-off part of us tells us about ourselves, and what its importance is, we have a difficult time discerning how to make constructive use of it. Therefore, the way a demon generally manifests itself appears to us to be harmful.

We are like, but generally less extreme than, the man in this story [see verse 27]—we are often moved to action by a frame/state of mind that seems to us to be alien to our dominant personality. When under its influence our self-talk gets interrupted by whatever the agenda is of this frame of mind so that we are no longer in our right mind and cannot maintain our persona. We can then be induced to act in ways not considered appropriate by our dominant personality. When we are driven in this way, we lose our sense of place or connection, and can be pushed into isolation and loneliness. Intrusions like this are usually related to something in our past that has impacted us, and which we have been unable to integrate and get beyond, so in the present we live caught in an unresolved issue from our past [the metaphor in the text is that we live in the tombs]. The story says that Jesus had initiated the emergence of this frame of mind out from the place where it lived and into the man’s awareness so that he was more conscious of it, and the man was tormented by what he was experiencing. He was so beset by it that his primary need was simply to not be tormented. The Greek word translated as torment means “to torture,” from “a touch-stone,” from “a base [going to the bottom].” There are times when we cannot endure any more of what we are experiencing, and therefore cannot engage in any work that would get to the bottom of what splits us, even though

that would bring us some relief. The only thing we can imagine is to not be so tormented.

The heading for this story says that Jesus healed this man, and in our hearing “healed” means rid the man of his split. I think that happened, but not in the way we imagine. The word translated as “healed” is a verb meaning “to save, i.e. deliver or protect,” from a root “safe.” I think the man needed to be protected and kept safe from the excessive quality of his own experience, and the story tells us how this man’s need to not be tormented was honored. Approaching the story this way puts us on a better footing in terms of what we in our time know about the mind, namely that ultimately our minds find relief when what has been split off becomes integrated, and that this integration is something that occurs over time in small increments of absorption and not usually in one dramatic event. The demons ask Jesus not to send them back to the abyss [the word refers to a lower world of the dead]. So a bargain is struck where the demons can live in the pigs; the pigs run down a hill and into a lake and drown [the word “drown” means “to stifle; by drowning or overgrowth”] [“stifle” means “to interrupt or cut off”]. Jesus does not kill the demons; he interrupts them. If we let the lake be a symbol for the unconscious, Jesus lets the demons live in the unconscious, a place from which they can emerge again. Demons trouble us when they intrude into our lives and we have no way to integrate them into our personality. If they retreat back into the unconscious, they do not trouble us so much. We want to remember that with God nothing is lost; ultimately, everything about us is included around our internal table. While a demon could make a mess out of a person’s life, it is also something of value. In the Greek world a person’s demon was the source of their creativity, their force. Perhaps Jesus understood this, and therefore he agrees to let the demons live in the unconscious where they remain active although not so disruptive. Eventually the man will have to integrate them and find a use for them, and so they remain available. In the meantime, the man ends up socially appropriate and in his right mind [of sound mind, i.e. sane and moderate].

God is gathering the different parts of us around our internal table. When the need arises, and the time is right, disowned parts

of us will be brought forward to engage us in the effort to unite with us. When we are visited by our demons, we always learn something new and important about our life in the past and our life in the present. However, the whole experience can be very frightening and overwhelming. We need to consider that we have a right to say: "Don't torment me any longer; don't unpack this anymore right now." The demons are stifled/interrupted; they are overgrown by whatever we do to keep ourselves distant from them. It is as if some part of us asks God to not do any more internal work right now, and God complies. I think that means that the work of recovering elements of our personality that have been removed from awareness moves into the background, and we are then able to go home in the sense of inhabit a social environment, and feel at home there because our conflict has returned to a manageable state.

There is a rhythm being described here which serves our being brought together around our internal table. As we become familiar with this rhythm, we can begin to relax into it. Demons come and go depending on many things, and we are asked to engage with them when we are able. When the work is too much, we are encouraged to ask that it be interrupted or cut off. God always intends to bring us out in a sane place. When our demons come again, God will help us pay attention to them, and the work to integrate them will begin again.

I think an understanding like this flies in the face of the idea in our culture that we are in charge of our own identity project. What is advocated here is a dance between God and us which results in our identity being unfolded over time, where God actively proposes components of our personality to be included in our experience of our self, components which we would not choose. In addition, and maybe most importantly, our task in this is not simply to accept what is proposed by overriding our resistance to it, but to interact with God regarding what and how much we can tolerate so that our resistance to what is proposed is honored and even valued. Even our resistance is included around our internal table. In this way, our internal environment is characterized not by warfare done in an effort to subdue ourselves, but by compassion

for and acceptance of the elements of our personality we have viewed with antipathy. On this journey we are not heroically perfecting ourselves in terms of our ego ideals but are intentionally allowing God to assemble our identity in a way we could not have imagined.

[Jim Robie, 6-21-19, 5th after Pentecost, Cycle C, Luke 8:26-39]