

“Practice the Pause”

A, Pentecost 22; 10:00 am

Joshua 3: 7-17; November 5, 2017

Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO

Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

I. WITH YOU AS I WAS WITH THEM

And the Lord said to Joshua: “I am with YOU, just as I was with Moses. And I am going to make that abundantly clear.”

And Joshua said to the children of Israel: “We are *going in!* We are to go to the edge of the water and not stop there. We gotta ‘wade in the water, children!’ And it gets better. We won’t be alone. God’s Ark, the very Presence of the Lord, will wade into the water with us!”

But first. But first. Before the Presence of the Lord goes in, we gotta build a team. No one wades alone. Gotta pick one from each group, and that Lead Team (voted on by the congregation at the Annual Meeting) will wade in the water first, carrying the symbol of the Presence of God.

And then, the rest of us, also linking arms and not walking or wading alone, will follow. Ready?!

And they did it. They built their teams; hoisted the Ark of the Covenant on the strongest shoulders and set out. Into the river! Right into the River Jordan. And when the toes touched the water—what had been raging and

rough and frightening.....was suddenly calm—with just *one* toe in. That doesn’t happen very often!

In the Jewish tradition, the story is often told with a different twist: the first, bravest and most faithful wader had to get quite a ways “beyond the toes.”

He, Nachshon be Aminadav, the first to walk into the yet-to-be split Red Sea, had to walk into the water up to his *nostrils* before it stopped raging and separated and a path through was clear and safe!

(Many thanks to Rabbi Brian Field for doing the research on this much-loved Jewish story.)

II. WADE IN THE WATER

Sometimes you just need to step in, and trust God to part the waters. And sometimes, that trust leads you to put one little toe in to find that God has been with you all along.

And sometimes you have to put one toe after another, after a whole foot, and an ankle, and a knee.....trusting that though you’re not *seeing* a lot of evidence of salvation, of rescue, that the One who created you is with you, and you’re not alone.

And then, you get up to your nostrils, and whew! The waters part and the seas are calmed and you and your compadres link arms even stronger and pass through that raging current onto solid ground once again.

III. UP TO OUR NOSTRILS!

Anyone feeling you've been wading in the water up to your nostrils? Welcome to **The Day After Bazaar!**

Last week we reflected on how we are tugged in many directions: by God holding onto us like a kite string, but also tugged from behind and before, every which way—in ways that *can* be overwhelming. With so much going on in our world today, and so many ways we can communicate now that we couldn't before, we can get tugged down in exhaustion, in a kind of Compassion fatigue.

And we asked ourselves: “What if allowing ourselves to be **tugged** by God, even when we can't always see the other end of the string, means that we are held fast and firm, and can **rest** in knowing that we are exactly where we are meant to be—aligned with God—feet firmly planted, holding on, being tugged, and just being held?”

For, you see, compassion fatigue has a sister malady: “Service Fatigue.” And there is no time better than the day after the Bazaar to talk about “Service Fatigue.”

Most of us not only set up all week long and tore down and worked many hours in between, but we've also been preparing all year long—preparing as if to give birth! Well, it's not *that* far off, is it?!

And your work is wonderful! It is beautiful, artistic and appreciated—probably far more than you'll ever come to know. And more than beautiful to behold with the eyes, the work of the Bazaar is a Gift to the

community—on a spiritual level far deeper and more lasting and profound than the mere items that get brought, eaten, sold, raffled, auctioned and sent out the door. For this act, this Gift of community extends out the doors and over the generations and embraces the Communion of Saints.

Take a breath. Give yourself a heartfelt pat on the back, a pat on the heart, and say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Aaaahhhh.....

IV. THE SEASONS ARE CHANGING

For now, starting today, it is a *different* kind of time. Time to take a Pause. We've been somewhat teasingly calling this the “Liturgical Season of Bazaar” these past few weeks, and although not an “official season”, it truly is a memorable and vital part of our life together in this community.

Now we move to a Season of Thanksgiving. Again, you won't see this on any official Liturgical Calendars, but it's an important part of our life together on this journey, and I declare that we *will* celebrate it! Together.

For we need a season of “resting in Gratitude.” Of taking a pause. Sitting back awhile and just feeling grateful. Giving thanks for anything and everything we can find; and *being* in an attitude of gratitude – human Beings for a time; not just Human Doings all the time!

V. PRACTICE THE PAUSE AND THE CUP

Today, this morning, we take a rest as we “practice the pause;” come to the Table, take a breath, fill our souls.

I invite you to get comfortable (if you’re not already dozing!), hold your hands out in a gesture of prayer. Fix your eyes on the candles, or the bread and cup, or even look out the window at the beautiful sky. Close your eyes if that works best for you. The only thing you *can’t* do is gaze at your watch or make a To Do List! For just a few minutes.

Practice filling your Cup.

“Practice the pause. Pause before judging. Pause before assuming. Pause before accusing. Pause whenever you’re about to react harshly and you’ll avoid doing and saying things you’ll later regret.”

— Lori Deschene

Practice the pause.

When in doubt, pause.

When angry, pause.

When tired, pause.

When stressed, pause.

And when you pause, pray.

-Toby Mac

"In many shamanic societies, if you came to a medicine person complaining of being disheartened, dispirited, or depressed, they would ask one of four questions: "When did you stop dancing? When did you stop singing? When did you stop being enchanted by stories? When did you stop being comforted by the sweet territory of silence?" (Gabrielle Roth)

Isaiah 43: When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and over-burdened, and I will give you rest! Put on my yoke and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
(Matthew 11)

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."
(Mt. 11, The MSG)

It is true that we are called to create a better world. But we are first of all called to a more immediate and exalted task: that of creating

our own lives.

THOMAS MERTON

VI. PRACTICE THE PRAYER NAP

How do we truly pause? For more than a minute? More than just today because the one leading the service made us go in, up to our nostrils, and “just do it?”

For more than just what it takes to forget that catchy saying by a popular Christian artist with a funky name (Toby Mack.)

The TELLS group is reading a book about this very thing—aligning yourself with God and loving like God loves. It’s called *The Rest That Works* by Scott Daniels.

The “rest that works” is described in a number of ways, but it’s more than mere sleep. It’s a kind of resting, coming home to yourself, aligning your heart with God’s heart. One of the tools that’s suggested for settling into that soul rest is called a “prayer nap.”

What we’ve just done is a kind of prayer nap. Practicing the pause together in community.

It’s also called meditative prayer or centering prayer, and might be best thought of as those ancient spiritual

practices with the “permission to fall asleep” added for good measure. Because, after all, what you *might* most need is a little more sleep!

A prayer nap is about “re-minding” us. About trusting God’s unconditional love for us.

“If you feel yourself questioning God’s Love for you, the remind yourself that God—The Spirit Behind and Within all Life—is *already* giving you life unconditionally. The fact that you are here proves it. As that truth sinks in, let it lift you.”

“You can feel so much more than fear. You can live in faith. You can trust Love to find or create a way forward, no matter what. As you move deeper with that, moving beyond solely a physical and mental exercise, the shift can open a wellspring that will lift your spirit like buoyant water would float your body.” (Scott Daniel, p. 226, *The Rest That Works*)

“Let go of trying to control things you can’t (like other people). Receive the peace that comes in realizing that you don’t have to play God. Let the Holy Spirit work. Trust that The Spirit will work. That’s really what faith is all about. You don’t have to figure everything out, fix everything that’s wrong or make anything happen by forcing *your* will.”

“Your only task is to settle into our Creator’s Love that is already giving you life, allow The Spirit to move in you and *work with it*, not control, force or coerce yourself out of fear. Let God be God. You be *you* – a

wonderful son or daughter of God invited to work with God like a cell in an Amazing Being.” (p. 232)

VII. PRACTICE BEING WHERE YOU ARE

And finally, an excerpt from:

A BLESSING FOR ONE WHO IS EXHAUSTED

By John O’Donohue

You have travelled too fast over false ground;
Now your soul has come to take you back.

Take refuge in your senses, open up
To all the small miracles you rushed through.

Become inclined to watch the way of rain
When it falls slow and free.

Imitate the habit of twilight,
Taking time to open the well of color
That fostered the brightness of day.

Draw alongside the silence of stone
Until its calmness can claim you.
Be excessively gentle with yourself.

Stay clear of those vexed in spirit,
Learn to linger around someone of ease
Who feels they have all the time in the world.

Gradually, you will return to yourself,
Having learned a new respect for your heart
And the joy that dwells far within slow time.

VIII. PRACTICE BEING FED

Not just brisket and chili and chicken soup and chips
and coleslaw and candy and cookies and pie! Practice
being fed by the living bread and never-empty cup.

Come to the feast child of mine

Come break the bread

Come drink the wine

Come to the feast

Leave your burdens behind

Come to the feast child of mine

Come to the feast child of mine

You are the branch

I am the vine

Come feed your soul, break the bread,
drink the wine.

Come to the feast child of mine

Come to the Table.....Amen.

