

YOU WILL BE FOUND Chula Vista Church, June 10th 2018

INTRO

Good morning again to each and everyone of you and thank you for allowing me to share my heart with you. First of all I love your interim pastor. Rev. Dr. Sharon Graff, has been, since our clergy coaching training began last year, a beacon of hope and light to my soul. Her heart, not that I am telling you anything you do not already know, is so keenly aware of God's presence. Sharon, thank you for asking me to be in this place today, sharing this pulpit. Let us pray ...

It is very rare when so many of the passages from the revised common lectionary speak to me in a unified manner. I am often bewildered why some passages are grouped together Sunday to Sunday, but this Sunday the thread that runs through each part of our Christian story is evident, if not blatantly not he surface, a thread, somewhat hidden in its intricacies is an affirming passage for all of us, as we seek to live out our call to this world. The thread of God's presence.

Genesis 1 ... "In the beginning ... " the creation myth, the creation story ... And God said Its good. It is a beautiful story. I emphasize story, because I firmly believe that is what it is. A story, written thousands of years ago to give all of creation a point of beginning. A story that gave the Israelites an identity ... an explanation of beauty and trial ... and an idea of the Divine. But still a story. This morning, we head into the middle of the story, the dreaded, temptation scene. The serpent who put the fruit of the tree of life in front of Eve who then shared it with her companion, Adam. Only a few short chapters into our story and things seem to shift don't they?

We make the journey from ... "God said it was good" to God asking, "where are you? Why are you hiding? Who told you you were naked?"

Powerful questions for sure ... questions that, I assume God knew God's answers, but questions that made the character Adam dig a bit deeper right? To reassess his current situation. To become aware again of God's presence in their lives.

We as a people are not immune to those crazy questions are we?

Life is all about questions? Pastor Sharon and I have had the incredible opportunity to discover and hone new skills for ministry. I know, from talking and coaching with Sharon that she believes in their power to change us and so much of what we do as coaches is to ask powerful questions. Questions that seek to get to the heart of one's desires. Questions that lead to the next moves in life.

And just as we see in the Genesis narrative of creation ... we see powerful questions all over the scripture.

Just like the psalmist in this morning psalm ... The writer cries out of the depths to God and ends up with a heart of resolution right? Listen to these two points of reference in verses 1 and 2.

1

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!

familiar words that we hear in certain musical requiems listen to these words paraphrased by Rev. Dr. Eugene Peterson of THE MESSAGE:

Help, God—the bottom has fallen out of my life!

Master, hear my cry for help!

Listen hard! Open your ears!
Listen to my cries for mercy.

You have to admit that there is a certain amount of angst in both of these renderings. Angst that I am sure, Adam and Eve felt in their story.... but hear now ... the resolution, first in verse 5

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.

PSALM 130:7

O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with
God is great power to redeem.

or as Peterson renders it:

O Israel, wait and watch for God—
with God's arrival comes love,
with God's arrival comes generous redemption.
No doubt about it—God will redeem Israel

MARK TRONTVEIT Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary wrote. "It is usually best to take rhetorical questions in Hebrew as expressions of absolute confidence. (Isn't that cool?) This confidence in God stirs the psalmist to express his eager anticipation of God's response (verse 5-6). Finally, moved by his own sense of forgiveness, the psalmist encourages the community (and us!) to bring that which is troubling them to the Lord in the certain hope that they will find a gracious, loving God, intent on their redemption (verses 7-8).

Even the Apostle Paul seems to have a similar answer in our Epistle reading today ...

2 CORINTHIANS 4:15-16

. 15Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. 16So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

Three different genres of scripture ... one amazing message ... God's presence is with us and assures us that we will be found.

One thing you should know about me is that I love musical theatre. It is not a strange occurrence where I don't access the spirit of Maria von Trapp, of SOUND OF MUSIC fame to explain the complexities of life. "Climb every mountain ... fired every stream." Or maybe from the truths of grace found in the ever popular classic, LES MISERABLES ... "To love another person is to see the face of God." Even more recent the amazing DEAR EVAN HANSEN, whose title character sings these powerful questions to reveal an answer of eternal truth ..

Have you ever felt like nobody was there? Have you ever felt forgotten in the middle of somewhere? Have you ever felt like you could disappear. That you would call ... no one will hear? Well. let that lonely feeling wash away. Maybe there's a reason to believe you'll be okay You will be found.

You see, in the story line, Evan Hansen is a young high school student who endures the challenges of being on the spectrum, as they say. Not really in an autistic way, but in a way that leads him to have great anxiety when it comes to interacting with others and indeed a great fear of human interaction with his teachers and peers. To make a long involved story, a little shorter and concise at the suicide of a fellow student, simply an acquaintance of Evan, Connor a stoner, drug user ... and another outsider himself, Evan

creates a sort post mortem online relationship in a series of emails, to Connor, in an attempt to fully realize that no one deserves to be forgotten in what seems to be an attempt to give his own life meaning and to realize that he too ... should never be overlooked or forgotten ... are you with me ... kind of?

Well when it becomes public knowledge that he had a “close” albeit imaginary relationship” with Connor, Evan becomes an internet sensation when he inadvertently creates the Connor project ... a social media campaign to honor the deceased Connor but ends up opening the eyes of those in **his** world to his **own** isolation and desire to be seen. And what results is a speech that he gave at a school assembly ... this special song, You Will Be Found ... These lyrics, this poetry is what I can only categorize as a psalm of the 21st Century.

A psalm that begins like so many of our writings in scripture with questions. Questions to get your imagination marinating and hopefully resulting in answers, a greater understanding of life ... a new sense of being found

Maybe this morning, our greater understanding is this ... YOU WILL BE FOUND.

Adam and Eve were found ... the psalmist was found and declared it ... Paul, was found and assured his community that they too are found.

So what Psalm of life are you able to write today. I wonder what questions have you had lately? What about the ones you have heard? What God winks,/ those little divine AHA moments have you had that have enabled you to accept God chasing after you in your questions? ... not to judge you ... or to punish you ... but questions that beg you to dig deeper and answers that provide divine protection ... a fig leaf of protection if you will. and turn around, to look, see and sense God’s presence in your situations. Where are

you? Who told you you were naked? You see ... as we read this ancient story, I sense that it is not all about creation in a physical sense ... Oh it is a beginning point. The starting point about creation's relationship with the Divine? A trust? A reminder of God's presence ... a reminder what Grace really is. Or maybe like the Psalmist ... an assurance that with God there is always steadfast love. And even like Paul as he writes. "These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever."

We search for meaning, we wait, we question, we doubt, we are tempted to lose heart ... to give up. We have a place in the story ... You see, we have to place ourselves in the story .. to see our part in the church's story, God's story, Christ's story. When we don't, we can find ourselves separated in spirit, separated in fellowship, separated, alone as we strive to be people who are seen, people who are heard, people who matter, people who make a difference in the world.

And that my new friends, is why we are so important to the world ... why the church is so important and why I believe the church, the United Church of Christ is not dying. You see, what was begun in a tangible yet experimental way in 1957 is a movement of Spirit and the results of this ongoing movement will never go away. Are you with me? Now let me be clear, what we know as the church might change in the way we do things, our form might become something entirely different than anything we can ever imagine.

But remember, Paul, reassuring these new believers, that what they do and who they are is worth it ... we can hear the Divine calling after us ... Where are you? Why are you hiding? Who told you were naked?

When we feel that nobody is there? When we feel forgotten in the middle of somewhere? When we feel like we could disappear. And when we call, no one will hear.

We have all been there, Those are the places in our lives where we are naked. That place where we are vulnerable or afraid ... where all of our defenses are down, the emotions are raw. Those times when we begin to question our purpose individually and as a church. Can you hear God in your garden ... Where are you? Who told you you were unworthy of my love? Who told you that you were less than perfect? Who told you that who you love is not okay with me? .Who told you that the church is dying? Powerful questions and I pray that we can have holy resolve.

Even when the storm comes crashing thru ... when you need a friend to carry you ... when you're broken on the ground You Will be Found.

Amen!