

THE HEART OF THE MATTER - THE UNTRoubLED HEART Eastertide

Psalm 31:5, 15-16
John 14:1-2

A Sermon Preached by Pastor Catherine Foote
University Congregational United Church of Christ
Seattle, Washington 98125
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Scripture:

Psalm 31:5, 15-16¹

Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.
My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.

John 14:1-2²

Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In God's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?"

Pastor Catherine Foote

God,
May the words we speak and
May what we carry in our hearts find grace in Your sight
For you are our Rock and our Redeemer. — Amen.

You know, Elizabeth Stone is the one who is attributed to this quote, but it could have been just about anyone. And, in fact, I think I've heard many of you say these words yourself.

"Making the decision to have a child, it is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body."

... To decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body.

Well, of course, first on this Mother's Day we think of mothers as we speak those words. And, as soon as we think of mothers, we think of others who have brought that compassionate and fierce energy into our lives. We think of ways we have brought that same energy into other people's lives, as well, because Mother's Day when it was first imagined was not imagined as a day simply to turn to our

¹ The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). 1989.

² Ibid.

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moms and say thank you. Mother's Day was imagined is a day when love and justice would join hands, and the wisdom of knowing what it means to have our hearts walking around forever out in the world, that Wisdom raised its voice and said, "If that be so, this is the world I want my heart to walk around in: a world of peace, a world of justice, a world of compassion, a world of love." So all of us, as we begin that journey of life, begin that journey of learning – what it means to break open our hearts, to set them free, to let them walk out around in the world. Isn't that what we saw when we stood here, when we blessed are confirmands. We saw our hearts walking around in the world. And we saw beauty. But, oh! the world they are walking into -- not in ignorance. You heard their statement of faith. If you didn't hear it, you can read it in your bulletin. It is a statement that acknowledges pain, barbed wire, darkness, difficulty, grief in the world. It is a faith that does not simply step out in ignorance, but steps out listening to the sound and knowing that sound might be hard to hear.

You know this story of Jesus in the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John is not necessarily a comforting story. We pull it out at memorial services saying, "Let not your heart be troubled. In God's house are many rooms and Jesus has gone to prepare a place so that eventually we might be there with God." Now, yes, I absolutely believe that is true; but let us remember that Jesus spoke those words when he was still very much alive and he was about to walk into a very troubling journey. His disciples were gathered with him there on that last night of his life. And they were indeed troubled. And Jesus reminded them of the connection of their heart to the world.

In chapter 14 we also find that verse we struggle with so much as progressive Christians "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus answers when Thomas says, "Jesus, how do we know the way to follow you?" "I am the way," Jesus says, "You don't get to God any other way." And we did with that verse in Christian history what we do with so much that troubles our hearts. We took it *out* of our hearts, we put it right *into* our heads, and we said, "Let me think about that," as if by thinking about it we might be able to control it. Oh, well, that must mean Jesus is the *only* way. That means what you believe *about* Jesus somehow makes things okay." But one thing I know about this journey of faith it is indeed a journey by heart, and the call of Jesus for that untroubled heart is to take that statement *out* of your head and put it back *into* your heart – or at the very least (or maybe at the most) *make* that connection between head and heart. Because Jesus when he talks about "the way" is not talking about what you believe; he's talking about *how* we have faith, what we lean into in our darkest times. The way he is traveling, he says, this journey by heart, Jesus says, *this* is the way to God. This is the way to truth. This is the way to life. It's as if God made the decision, the momentous decision to forever have God's heart walking around in the world: you and me, God's heart walking around in the world. And then God said, "I will partner with you to do everything I can, therefore, to make this world a place you may walk around in." And that's and that's the Way and that's the Truth and that is the Life!

So stop and listen, you will hear a sound. Stop and look you will see. And with eyes wide open, you will look directly into some very dark places. Haven't we felt that in this last week? Haven't we felt that hard place we're called to go into with an open heart. But look and listen for something more. Antoine de St. Exupéry said it this way, "It is only with the heart one can see rightly. If you look more deeply, if you listen more closely, you will see the face of God everywhere you look. You will hear the

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heartbeat of God every time you listen. It is only with the heart one sees rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye.”³

Congregational Response⁴

Stop, hey what's that sound,
ev'rybody look what's going down.
Stop, hey what's that sound,
ev'rybody look what's going down.

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Transcribed by Beth Bartholomew from www.universityucc.org/Sermons/2017/05/25/2017

³ Antoine de Exupéry, *Le Petite Prince [The Little Prince]*. 1943.

⁴ From “For What It’s Worth – Stop, Hey What’s That Sound” by Stephen Stills, performed by Buffalo Springfield; subtitle of song Ahmet Ertegun added from the chorus. Information from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For_What_It%27s_Worth_\(Buffalo_Springfield_song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For_What_It%27s_Worth_(Buffalo_Springfield_song)). Accessed 5/25/2017