



Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast August 30, 2020

At this Sunday's Chapel worship, The third cycle of life we find in the psalms is "new orientation" or "The New Normal". The question is "how and when do we get out of chaos into the new normal?"

Sunday Readings (13th Sunday After Pentecost-"Proper 17" Year A)

Exodus 3:1-15: After killing an Egyptian, Moses has gone into exile where he encounters the burning bush.

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c: "Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name."

Romans 12:9-21: Paul explains what God has done for those who have faith in Christ.

Matthew 16:21-28: Jesus tells his disciples he must undergo great suffering.

Not a sermon... but a summary of Sunday's sermon....

3,000 years ago, Elijah is on the run and ends up in the wilderness wanting to die. (See 1 Kings 18 for background, and 1 Kings 19:1-15 for his encounter with God during his time of "disorientation" and despair.) An understatement: Elijah is in a bad time in his life; he has stopped asking for God's help. In the wilderness, God does not appear in the great wind or fire or earthquake, but in the quiet. Does Elijah's coming out of the cave remind us of ourselves six months into the pandemic?

Moving ahead three millennia, I heard "The Pandemic is Over" on the news this week. Is the end of COVID-19 really that simple? Won't there be a huge display? Will COVID-19 be consumed by a ball of heavenly fire? If the Psalms teach us anything, it is that we go through hard times, sometimes unimaginable times. Going through these times is a winding, seemingly endless, meaningless ordeal. We are humans and it is OK to talk about how bad we feel, how rough times are, and to sit with each other and share our common experiences. Whether or not we realize it, this helps us move from chaos to a "new normal." We are taking small steps, and some missteps, but we are personally and communally being transformed. God is still and always in the quiet places – we just need to listen.

Going back 2000 years to the times of early Christianity, the most disruptive, chaotic, and disheartening event for the faithful was Jesus's crucifixion. But as we know, the shattered expectations ("disorientation" – see today's RCL Gospel Matt 16:21-28) gave way to the new orientation of the Resurrection.

What can we learn from Psalms of New Orientation? The "pit" is not the end of life; there is more. God hears our prayer. New Orientation is not simply a return to an old normalcy; it is another stage in our journey of faith. Life becomes coherent once again. Resurrection – God above us, beside us, within us and God in our communities.

May the peace which passes all understanding be with you. – Vance

*** Some Psalm suggestions for reading as prayers: 23, 27, 30, 34, 40, 138....there are more! ***

Prayers for many of our friends and family facing cancer treatments; those who have died from COVID-19 and their families and for those who have the disease; for relief from the California fires; for a safe opening of schools.