

“Finding You in the Wilderness:”

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Sunday, March 22, 2020

Or, In Case I Didn't Ruin Enough of the Ending of Frozen II Last Time

For those of you who are reading this at home, the Fresh Perspectives that I shared with the children ties directly into the sermon, so I have added it below:

Would the children please grab a blanket and then come back to the screen?

Spring often makes me think of butterflies. You probably know the story of the *Very Hungry Caterpillar* or you've studied butterflies in school, right? So, you probably know that butterflies start off as caterpillars. After wandering around and eating a lot, they shed their skin and reveal the chrysalis, which is a hard-protective shell. We can pretend that we have shed our skin and now have a protective shell with our blankets, like this. (Wrap blanket around myself but leave my face out.)

Once inside this shell, the caterpillar transforms into a butterfly! This transformation can take a long time. If the butterfly is somewhere cold, it can stay in that shell until it gets warmer. In any case, it stays there until it's safe to come out.

I bet you can tell where I'm going with this, right? While we are in self-quarantine, we can think of ourselves like we are caterpillars. We're inside our protective shells, waiting to be able to come out. Being inside that shell might be like going into the Unknown, right? But while we're in our shells—our blankets or our homes—we can think about ourselves and who we want to be. For example, we can decide that we would like to be more like Jesus than we already are—kinder, more loving, more giving. So here are the questions I want to leave with you this week: When you come out of your chrysalis at the end of this quarantine, what do you want to be like? How can you use your time at home or in your blanket to figure out how to be that way?

Let's pray together: Loving God, thank you for butterflies. Help us to use this time in our chrysalis, to transform into the people you call us to be. Amen.

Sermon

The musical meditation that will follow the sermon today is a song from the end of Frozen II. For copyright reasons, we cannot play it in the sanctuary or live stream it. So, I invite you, now, to open a new tab in your browser to get the song ready. If you have a copy of the bulletin at home, I invite you to type in the you tube link I've posted there. Otherwise, you can go to YouTube in that new tab and search for the song “Show Yourself” from Frozen II. If you click the one that is called DisneyMusicVevo, you should get the complete song. Please pause it until the end of the sermon. Once I have said, “Amen,” please go back to “Show Yourself” and listen to it. I will turn the sound off from my end so that I can listen to it, so our live feed will be silent for the duration of the song, which is about 4 and a half minutes.

Please pray with me: Holy God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be faithful and pleasing unto you, for you are our rock and our salvation. Amen.

Near the beginning of January, we had to cancel our worship service because it was too icy to go out. So, I sent out a YouTube video of one of my favorite preachers, the Rev. Barbara Brown

Taylor. In that video, she talks about the need to seek silence every day so that we can meditate and become more well acquainted with ourselves. Chad Frost then provided us with a sermon in February about the importance of meditation and self-awareness. Well, my friends, it seems that the world is forcing us to listen to their advice right now.

Spending time alone, even for 20 minutes a day, can be a challenge for many of us. A meme I saw on Facebook this week sums it up well. It says, "Introvert friends, please put down your books and go check on the extroverts. We are not okay!"

This meme made me laugh, since it seemed so very true. I am struck by how very much I miss being able to see and talk to people face to face, though I want to assure you all that I am okay. Like most memes, though, this one stereotypes. Our introvert friends are probably also missing their face to face time with their close friends, and being an introvert certainly doesn't make a person more able to do the kind of deep soul searching that can come from spending time alone. We all find ways to distract ourselves from looking at ourselves and thinking about who we are. We do this through work, socializing, reading, game playing, watching tv and movies, and following social media. We fill our days and minds with planning, with thinking about past conversations and events...really, with anything to avoid looking inward. Why is that?

I told a friend, once, that I was taking a class on Christian meditation and self-discovery and told her that the goal of it was to look inward to find, and be with, my true self. She squirmed and looked uncomfortable for a while, then finally said, "I couldn't do that. What if, when I look, there's no one there?"

What if, when I go looking for my true self, I find that there's no one there?

This is the wilderness, indeed.

Who are we, when we're not surrounded by people or when we're not able to fill our days with work? Who are we, in the deep silence of the night? Who are we, when we stand in silence in our backyards?

Your answers to these questions are your own; I cannot give them to you. But I can say that this journey of self-discovery or self re-discovery is worth taking. I can assure you that you will find something, despite my friend's fear to the contrary. And I can also say something about what you are likely to find.

You will find that you are not alone, even in the depths of your soul:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

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.

For I am the Lord your God.

These are the timely words of our scripture for this morning. They remind us that, no matter the journey we take, whether it is an outward journey through a physical desert, or an inward journey through a personal or spiritual wilderness, God walks with us. God knows our name.

God knows your name, which means that God knows who you are and, just like the blind man from today's Gospel lesson, you can be made to see yourself through our God. Being in self-quarantine where we find ourselves alone or in silence makes us, figuratively, like the blind man of our story; we cannot see what comes next and we may not be able to see the deep reaches of our soul. So, I invite you to do something during those quiet moments at home. While you sit there in the chrysalis of yourself, imagine Jesus sitting there with you. Look deeply into his eyes and just be. Know that the one Jesus sees in your eyes is redeemed, is beautiful, is worthy, and is deeply loved. This YOU, this one that Jesus sees, this is the one you've been waiting and looking for through all of the things you've done to distract yourself from this inner journey. You may have been lost, but now you are found.

Amen.