

Wednesday Worship 21st October 2020

'Liturgy of the Ordinary' - Losing Keys

Introduction

This week we continue to think about finding God in the everyday moments of life, based on ideas from the book 'Liturgy of the Ordinary' by Tish Harrison Warren. Today the subject is losing keys, or confession and the truth about ourselves. In the moments when things go wrong we often see our weaknesses but also the love of God in our lives.

Opening prayers and lighting of a candle

We meet in the presence of God
All **who knows our needs,
hears our cries,
feels our pain,
and heals our wounds.**

Be with us, Spirit of God;
All **nothing can separate us from your love.**
Breathe on us, spirit of God;
All **fill us with your saving power.**
Speak in us, wisdom of God;
All **bring strength, healing and peace.**

Hymn: All my hope on God is founded

Prayer

Honour the Lord with me;
let us exalt his name together.
All **O magnify the Lord with me;
let us exalt his name together.**

I sought the Lord and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.
All **O magnify the Lord with me.**

In my weakness I cried to the Lord;
he heard me and saved me from my trouble.
All **Let us exalt his name together.**

The Lord is close to the broken hearted;
All **O magnify the Lord with me.**

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.
All **O magnify the Lord with me;
let us exalt his name together.**

1st Reading: Isaiah 44.1-8, 21-22

But now hear, O Jacob my servant,
Israel whom I have chosen!
Thus says the Lord who made you,
who formed you in the womb and will help you:
Do not fear, O Jacob my servant,
Jeshurun whom I have chosen.
For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my spirit upon your descendants,
and my blessing on your offspring.
They shall spring up like a green tamarisk,
like willows by flowing streams.
This one will say, 'I am the Lord's',
another will be called by the name of Jacob,
yet another will write on the hand, 'The Lord's',
and adopt the name of Israel.

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel
and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts:
I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.
Who is like me? Let them proclaim it,
let them declare and set it forth before me.
Who has announced from of old the things to come?
Let them tell us what is yet to be.
Do not fear, or be afraid;
have I not told you from of old and declared it?
You are my witnesses!
Is there any god besides me?
There is no other rock; I know not one.

Remember these things, O Jacob,
and Israel, for you are my servant;
I formed you, you are my servant;
O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.
I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud,
and your sins like mist;
return to me, for I have redeemed you.

Prayer of response

Lord, our strength and Redeemer,
hold us safe for we are called by your name, and give us the joy of your salvation.
All **Amen.**

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

Prayer of response

O God, our Lord and Shepherd,
comfort us with your protecting presence
that we may walk with you in this life
and be at home with you for ever.

All **Amen.**

2nd Reading: 1 John 1

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Prayer of response

Lord our God and our light,
help us to walk in the light,
lift us when we fall,
forgive us our sins,
and make us clean
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

3rd Reading: Luke 15.1-10

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus]. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

So he told them this parable: 'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

'Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

Prayer of response

Lord, when we feel we've lost our way
or that we're not good enough to be found by you,
remind us that you are the God
who goes out looking for just one lost sheep
or a single coin,
and values each one of us more than life itself.

All **Amen.**

Hymn: The kingdom of God is justice and joy

Reflection

It's a mysterious thing to me how keys so often manage to go missing.

Putting them down without thinking is fatal but putting them in a safe place doesn't always work either.

I find that I have to put them in my bag if I want to be sure of finding them in the morning, but even then there's the problem that they always disappear into the depths of the bag and I can't find them in there.

It doesn't matter what shape or size the bag is, I end up rummaging around for ages trying to extract them.

It's a very annoying thing when you're all ready to leave the house to go somewhere and you want to be on time but suddenly the keys are nowhere to be found and the stages of key searching begin.

First up is the logical approach. Retracing your steps, looking in the obvious and usual places. You try to stay calm and rational – it's not a big deal in the grand scheme of things and they must be around somewhere.

Then, you get self-condemnation as you start to call yourself an idiot for not being able to find them.

Third up is vexation, as frustration grows and you start to blame both yourself and other people – the kids, your partner, the dog, God for not helping you.

Stage four is desperation as you start looking in places you've already been and places where the keys couldn't possibly be

Stage five: a last-ditch attempt to stop, breathe, pray and calm down.

Then, finally, comes despair, as you flop down declaring that you'll never find the keys and will be stuck here for ever. Everything is ruined. The day is stupid, you're stupid, the entire planet is stupid.

It's usually at this point that the keys suddenly appear in a place you could've sworn you'd already looked at least three times.

Not being able to find your keys for a while is not actually a big thing, not compared to everything else that's going on in the world.

But sometimes a tiny thing that shows us we're not in control of our lives as much as we thought, or a petty irritation, bump or hiccup in our day, can show all the weakness, neediness and sinfulness we keep just under the surface of our lives.

Small things go wrong and suddenly we're snapping at people, shutting doors harder than necessary, muttering under our breath, or worse.

It's not like this is the valley of the shadow of death; it's just a pothole on the paved roads of our lives.

Yet, it's in these petty moments that Jesus comes to meet us, to heal the fears and wounds that lie under our overreactions and unhelpful choices.

He sees that our crossness over lost keys comes from a fear of losing control, that our anger over a driver not indicating comes from a fear of vulnerability, that our muttering and snapping come from a fear of showing our true feelings in case we lose the people we love. So, he comes to heal and to save.

We are all broken and injured people, however much we try to put on a good front, and the ways we treat ourselves and others reflect that.

But rejoice, because Jesus came for us: the lost, the broken, the irritable and the unreasonable.

In his love for us he came to bring us healing and wholeness.

We need, in turn, to practise meeting him in the small moments of grief, frustration and anger, to let him heal us, to live out the big story of sin and redemption when we get annoyed on a cold, grey day in October.

Otherwise, we risk spending our lives in a fog of low-grade discontentment, grumbling and despair.

All this is about repentance, a constant movement in our Christian life of turning back to God day by day, not running away, making excuses or minimising our sin and brokenness but letting him love, heal and make right what is wrong.

We need to form a habit of letting God love us, trusting his mercy and receiving his words of forgiveness.

We also gather together and speak words of repentance in church, to remind us that none of us are there because we're good but because we need God.

Then we hear the words of forgiveness, of absolution, spoken to us.

It's not that God needs a go-between to forgive us, but we need that spoken assurance, a loud, confident voice reminding us that whatever the voices inside us might say we are forgiven and loved.

As we gather in church to confess we're also reminded that our brokenness doesn't only affect us.

We're a community who need one another, and what affects one affects all, for we're one body in Christ, and when one part suffers or is broken the whole body suffers.

And we all matter to God, the one like a man looking for a single sheep when he had plenty more in his flock, or like a woman looking for a single coin when she had money enough left over.

God searches more earnestly for us than we do for lost keys, with more love and passion than we can imagine, and unlike us he never flops down in despair but keeps looking in the hope that none will be lost.

Intercessions

Heavenly Father, when our wilderness journey
through the upheavals of pandemic, upheaval and difficulty ends,
and normality returns to our lives,
remind us to look back and see where you carried us through,
deepened our faith and provided us with your loving care.
Be with those who need your strength and comfort now.
In the day of trial:

All **be present, Lord.**

Holy Spirit, when suffering is the result of our own sin,
inspire us to turn around, ask for help, accept your forgiveness,
and live a new life in your grace.
May we know and reflect
your love, understanding and compassion.
In the day of trial:

All **be present, Lord.**

Holy Spirit, reconciling God,
in Christ make us a new creation,
and send us out with a mission
to be your ambassadors of love, peace and new life.
Make us bearers of light to those who have no hope.
In the day of trial:

All **be present, Lord.**

Lord Jesus, as you told parables to make the gospel clear,
put us in a story of your choosing,
and bring us to a deeper faith in you.
May we draw closer to you each day
to be transformed and equipped to do good things.
In the day of trial:

All **be present, Lord.**

We pray for those who need to be reminded
that there is healing and welcome in your presence.
Seek them out Lord, bring them home,
and make us ready to open our hearts to them.
In the day of trial:

All **be present, Lord.**

God of mercy,
All **you know us and love us
and hear our prayer:
keep us in the eternal fellowship
of Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Amen**

Trusting in the compassion of God,
let us pray with confidence
as our Saviour has taught us:

All **Our Father...**

Hymn: The Spirit lives to set us free

Closing prayers

As we go out into the world, may we
do justice, be strong, be generous,
attentive to those who need us,
and respectful of our world.

May we love mercy,
be kind and forgiving,
and always hold out love.

May we walk humbly with our God,
be attentive and obedient,
following after wisdom and not wandering off the road.

May we love God with all that we have,
heart, mind and soul,
dreams, tears and laughter.
And may we love our neighbour as ourselves.

May we be who we are: children of God.
All **Amen.**

Let us go out,
trusting in the love, faithfulness and power of Jesus.
May we know his peace
even in the midst of the storm.
And the blessing of God,
Saviour, Lord and Friend,
be upon us now
and for evermore.

All **Amen.**

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All **In the name of Christ.
Amen.**