

Luke 10:38-42

³⁸Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Luke 18:15-17

¹⁵People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. ¹⁶But Jesus called for them and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁷Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."

This past Thursday a few of us had the chance to hear the lifelong Peace Activist, Father John Dear speak at *Rediscovered Books*. He talked about spending a day with Archbishop Desmond Tutu awhile back – he said that when he arrived, Bishop Tutu came right up to him – didn’t shake his hand or offer a greeting, but grabbed him by the shirt and shook him and said, “John, you and I have to work for peace everyday for the rest of our lives!”

And then a bit later, John asked him how he sustains himself, how he keeps working for peace and reconciliation after all these years (he is 86 years old after all). And Bishop Tutu said, “every day I cry – I weep at the pain in the world, and every day I laugh.” Every day I cry, every day I laugh.

As we conclude our series this week on *Faith in the Midst of Trouble*, we have spent time the past couple of Sundays thinking about the first part of what Bishop Tutu said – I cry every day. We have talked about the importance of allowing some of the pain and discomfort have its way with us – to work on us – to move us. In the various things I have read these past weeks in preparation for this series, this is something I read again and again: from Walter Bruggemann, Jim Wallis, Barbara Brown Taylor, and now John Dear – to spend time in lament, in sorrow, in pain at some of the serious trouble in our communities and world. That the Spirit of God might move us from lament and sorrow to compassion. We have touched on this piece. But to laugh every day, we have neglected this piece of what Bishop Tutu says – this piece that also sustains him to try and follow Jesus every day, to work for peace every day for whatever years he has left on this earth – to laugh every day.

And so this is what we will attend to on this Memorial Day Sunday as we conclude this worship series, that part of being people of faith in the midst of trouble means being people of joy – people who take delight. That in the face of so much trouble, we continue to delight in the Lord and all that God has given us.

To delight doesn't mean to ignore the painful realities of our lives or the world. To be a person of joy doesn't mean that we stick our head in the sand or plug our ears during the world headline portion of the nightly news; to be people of delight doesn't mean we have to scroll quickly through the painful headline that comes through our news feed. Brene Brown, the great researcher on shame, guilt, and belonging talks about the connection of our full emotional selves – that when we close ourselves off to the feelings we consider negative: pain, discomfort, loneliness – we also close ourselves off from fullness of joy, delight and laughter. When we try to dull those difficult feelings, we dull ourselves to the positive feelings – the dulling of our emotions with substances, or spending all our time on our electronic devices, or listening to too much sports talk radio – these equally dull the times of joy and delight.

The Jesuit Priest, Father Greg Boyle who has spent his adult life living with gang members in Los Angeles and founder of Homeboy Industries(whose tagline is “Nothing stops a bullet like a job), says he became a priest because he found the Jesuit priests at his school to be, (quote) “this combo burger of *absolute hilarity and joy*. He says, “They were the most fun people to be around. And they were prophetic. This was during the time of the Vietnam War. So we'd laugh a

lot, and I'd go with them to protesting the war. So the combination of the prophetic and the hilarious — I loved that.”¹

Prophetic word and hilarity. Tears and laughter. Discomfort and delight.

These brief stories of Jesus from Luke's Gospel, of him being in the home of his friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus; and later the story of Jesus welcoming and blessing children – these are stories that came to mind when I thought of Jesus and delight.

That Jesus, in the midst of his brief public ministry of only three years, takes time to delight. To delight in children. You picture this serious scene of Jesus teaching and talking to people, and then there are children – being loud, crying, laughing – distracting from the important serious business to be done. And the disciples trying to squash that: to go and tell the children to be quiet, or to tell the parents to get their kids under control. And, of course Jesus says, “let them come, do not stop them.” And it makes me wonder if part of that welcoming of the children is not just for the kids and the families, but part of it is for Jesus – for his own need to bounce a child on his knee, to make a silly face, to laugh and delight at being with children. Perhaps being surrounded by those children reminded Jesus of the importance of what he was doing, it renewed him in his calling – for these children of poverty, these children living under Roman occupation, these children living under the deadly thumbs of Herod and Cesar. Or, perhaps, they just made him laugh and renewed his soul for that day. Give us this day, our daily bread of delight.

¹ This comes from his interview with Krista Tippett's radio show “On-Being.”

Some of you know that I started serving as a Big Brother through *Big Brothers/Big Sisters* a couple of years ago. It wasn't out of a noble gesture to do something good, but of feeling a bit of an absence of delight in my own life – after an extended time of feeling some dryness, I told Jenna, “I think I need more time with kids in my life.” I needed a bit more delight, which for me, comes from hanging out with a cool 4th grader and helps me not take myself too seriously.

How do we cultivate delight? In the face of so much wrong, how might we in hope be a people who are a people of joy?

Sabbath is the first thing that comes to mind. That in the midst of the cycle of feeling we must be endlessly productive, we must rest. This is a lie of consumerism, that we get our worth from what we produce and what we consume. This is the temptation of being endlessly accessible by text or email – to be productive. To rest. To walk. To pray or meditate. To bike. To play games. To garden. To watch football. To bake. To read. Whatever it is that helps you break the cycle of production and consumption – what in Egypt was a cycle of brick-making – we now call that capitalism or consumerism. Sabbath forms us as people of joy and delight over time. It helps keep away the bitterness, being overwhelmed, being burnt-out, and losing our ability to interact with compassion.

When we think of Jesus and Sabbath we often think of him going off to a quiet place on his own, which he did. But I also think of this story of him at the home of his friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus – that here Jesus is resting in the company of friends. *And in the midst of all that the world needs, he sits and talks with Mary.* I think this story works metaphorically, with

Martha attending to the work – that important work that needs to be done in the world, the work of non-violence, of justice, or charity. And in the midst of all of that, there must be time taken to sit together, to rest, to attend to delighting in relationship – to attend to our own soul for that day.

Delight happens in *relationship*. What Father Greg Boyle calls kinship. What Brene Brown calls, “move in close.” Kinship is not serving the other, but being one with the other. Jesus was not a man for others, he was one with others. There is a big difference in that. That is part of what we see with him and Mary, together building the bonds of kinship. Building the bonds of mutual transformation – where we bring ourselves into the relationship knowing that it is our own transformation that we are seeking.

Father Greg Boyle, says of his quarter-century of living in and among LA gang members, “I’ve learned everything of value really in the last 25 years from precisely the people who you think are on the receiving end of my gifts and talent and wisdom, but quite the opposite. It’s mutual.”² This is the mutual transformation of delight.

When we move in close to people, when we get to know others and allow ourselves to be known as well, I think that is one of the places of deep delight. Or, as Dorothy Day put it, *where there is no love, put love, and you will find love.*

When we move in close, when we move toward kinship, we build compassion and begin to move away from judgment. A compassion, says Father Greg, *that can stand in awe at what people have to carry rather than stand in judgment at how they carry it?* And I think that’s sort of

² Also from his interview from “On-Being.”

the key here. That's the place of health in a community. When we can stand in awe at what people have to carry, rather than stand in judgment at how they carry it. This happened for me at the Homeless Day Shelter a few years ago, I was driving with someone to go pick-up some food for Corpus – I was having a hard time with this person. And as we were driving he started to tell me about beatings from his step-father, and about being 14 years old and coming into his house while his step-father is beating his mom – and so he took a gun, at 14 years old, and told his step-dad to get out and never come back. That is more than I have ever had to carry in any of my 38 years.

And, now whenever I am having a hard time with someone at Corpus – when I wonder if they are lying to me, or someone is just getting on my nerves – sometimes through the grace of God, I remember that story and I pause and think, “maybe, all things considered, this person is actually doing pretty well.”

But not just in places like homeless shelters, here as well, or with our families or friends – to remember some of the woundedness that we are carrying. Sometimes we call that having grace with each other, when we pause to consider some of the woundedness we might be carrying. This is kinship.

We move into relationship, into kinship. This is the place of delight. Not that relationship isn't hard and messy – it certainly is. But it is also where love and delight are built. And in our delight, we are moved to work for justice, love and peace.

There is this brief story of Cesar Chavez, this great leader of the farm worker movement, he was with a reporter who commented to him and said, "Wow, these farm workers, they sure love you." And Cesar just shrugged and smiled and he said, "The feeling's mutual." His delight in his fellow farm workers was part of what drove his work, part of what sustained him, and part of what nurtured his own soul.

When I think of some of you who most are working to care for our earth, those of you working to stop and reverse Climate Change – you are also some of the people who most delight in the earth. You are those who find such delight in walking, fishing, backpacking; in the animals that God has created, the birds of the air or the cat on your lap; the delight you get from plunging your hands into the soil – you who delight in God's great creation are both renewed in and driven by your delight.

What is it that moves us to stand-up/speak-out for children being separated at the border; from families being separated by our immigration system? To speak-up to try and avoid another war? What moves us to give money to Mennonite Central Committee or other places seeking desperately to get food to children who are literally starving because of violence and sanctions? What moves you to continue to teach or counsel or seek to bring a bit of healing instead of giving up? At least in part, it is the delight we have in the children that we know and love: the children here at Hyde Park Mennonite, the delight we have as our students, our clients, our nieces & nephews, our neighbor kids, our grandchildren. Our delight moves us to act.

So, in the face of so much trouble all around us, let us dare to take time to delight – to pause in both the joy and the pain that fill our world. Let us be a people of prophetic passion and a people of hilarity; a people who both laugh and cry.

Friends, let us be so bold as to remember to delight:

In your morning coffee

In the birds that visit your feeder

In walking your dog

In the smile of a child

In the laugh of a friend

In the setting sun hover over the foothills

In your hands that dig in the soil or sand a piece of wood

In those that you are serving; in those serving you.

In the deep and endless love of God.

In the deep and endless love that is God.

Amen and amen.