

GRACE CHURCH
Lent One - Year A (RCL)

Honesdale, PA
1 March 2020

Genesis 2: 15-17; 3:1-7
Psalm 32
Romans 5: 12-19
Matthew 4: 1-11

1. *TURN*

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“To turn, turn, will be our delight,
'til by turning, turning we come 'round right.”

Hymnal # 554

I have a problem.

When Bishop Michael Curry was elected as our Presiding Bishop -
he called us to practice *The Way of Love*.

That's not the problem.

The problem I have is to take the seven themes of the Way of Love
and use them for these Lenten meditations,
basing my Lenten journey on these seven little books.

The problem is that there are only six Sundays during Lent.

I should have started the first book last week for Ash Wednesday -
it's titled, “Turn,” as in repentance, like Ash Wednesday.

The Way of Love is: to Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest.

The introduction to the first book reminds us that,

With God's help, we can turn from the powers of sin, hatred, fear, injustice and
oppression [turning] toward the way of truth, love, hope, justice and freedom. In
turning we re-orient our lives to Jesus Christ.

Turn, p. viii

The word used in the Old Testament for repentance is *בוש* (Shuv),
literally to turn around.

In our Baptismal Promises there are three “renunciations,”

We ask the Candidate for Baptism,

“Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?”
reminding us of our first Reading today, Adam and Eve's “original” sin,
to which all humanity falls prey.

The second renunciation, asks,

“Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt
and destroy the creatures of God?”

Or simply, how do we as humans, as individuals destroy God's creation.

And the third,

“Do you renounce all sinful desires
that draw you from the love of God?”

Those things that destroy this part of God's creation - me.

The three renunciations are followed by three promises,
to which we are to respond, "I will with God's help":
 "Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?"
 "Do you put your whole trust in Christ's grace and love?"
and finally, "Do you promise to follow and obey Jesus as your Lord?"

How *do* we do these things, with God's help.
There is the saying that the road to Hell is paved with good intentions.
I think that's false.
I believe the road to Heaven is paved with good intentions.
We can't do it by ourselves,
 we can't change our humanity.
Alone, that is.
 we respond, "I will with God's help."
The important part is the intent to *allow* God.
What God says to us, is "my Spirit will come and help you."
As St. Paul tells us,

 "The Spirit helps us in our weakness;

Romans 8:26-28

We can do these things only with God's help,
as we turn back towards the love of God and of God's Creation.

The authors of *Turn* suggest that
 "the call of Baptism is not just to an affirmation of faith; It is also a commissioning
 for ministry that might be called an 'ordination of the laity...'"

 "We learn the significance of our Baptism only by practicing the faith into which the
 Baptismal rite initiates us."

page 29

In Baptism, we symbolically pass the Candidate, child or adult, through death.
The Cub Scouts noted a couple of weeks ago, you just can't live under water.
Though I am proud that we possess the Hone family Baptismal font,
 I wish had a large pool to literally pass the Baptized under water.
One of the Scouts wanted to know how long I would hold them under.
"Just long enough."
And he got scared.
"It's OK. I don't really do that."
But I wish I could;
 the symbolism would be so much stronger.
We pass the Baptized into death - the death of Christ,
 and we raise them out of the water into the Resurrection Life.
But you're not "done" - you've only begun to live.
The rest of your life is a constant turning, turning:
 re-turning.

+ 3 +

To quoting that old Shaker hymn,
“that by turning, turning, we turn out right.”

Now the Gospel.
Like Jesus, ha’ Satan, the Adversary, the one who Fights against us,
tempts us with the same and more:
Hunger, Power, Wealth.
But like Jesus, Scripture answers Satan.
And the angels minister to us.
The Holy Spirit, Angels, Holy Scripture.

Turning around, it’s not always easy to see Whom it is we are to see.
We turn around, and our focus needs adjusting.
Because, yes, we know, there are other gods out there pulling on us.
But our God is simple:
God is goodness.
God is love.
God is beauty.
God is peace.
God is simple joy.

I urge you to steal - even though that is one of the Big Ten -
steal one of those red books in front of you,
the Book of Common Prayer.
It’s OK, we can buy more!
This week read the Baptismal Covenant,
or the Renewal of Baptismal Vows.
And then, you might want to explore the Catechism in the back,
and in the fine print in the Historic Documents,
the 39 Articles of Religion.
It is really great Lenten disciplines to rehearse who we are all as Anglicans.

God is like a magnet which pulls on us.
Another hymn comes to mind, attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas:
“I sought the Lord and afterwards I knew
God moved my heart to seek him, seeking me.”
Allow God to seek you.
And turn, turn that by “turning, turning you end up right.”
AMEN.

Hymnal #689

CHILDREN'S SERMON -

Piñata

a bandana/blind-fold, piñata

Have you ever tried to hit a piñata?
Tell me how it works - it's been a long time since I did it.

they blindfold you, spin you around...

Did you know that the piñata is Mexican,
and originally came with seven points -
they symbolize what we call the seven deadly sins.

show a picture.

The stick represents us fighting the temptations,
and when the piñata is finally broken,
it shows that we finally break Satan's temptations,
and the candy and prizes inside represent the rewards of keeping faith.

*If possible have one, and take turns blindfolding
the children until someone releases the prizes.*

Let's pray:

Jesus, you help us to fight the Devil and the temptations we often have to be bad. We want to be good, and we need your help. We also know that in the end, you will give us the great reward of heaven. Give us the strength of this faith every day.

AMEN.

