

Message from Robin+ 8-16-20

This week I have been thinking about the ways the pandemic has exposed some broken systems and fault lines in long held practices, and has given us a new awareness of things we either took for granted or never really paid attention to before our world changed so dramatically.

So many things are different now and while many of us still hope for some return to “normal” most of us can admit that in some ways the old normal was not all that great in some ways, and that these past months have given us some time to reflect on what is truly important to us and to our way of being in this world.

We know things now that we did not know before, we have new understanding about so many things we chose to ignore or swept under the rug. Perhaps we lived in a kind of innocence. Theologian and mystic Rev. Howard Thurman (1900–1981) explores the creative tension that exists between innocence and knowledge, each honoring the other, using the story from Genesis we all know (or thought we knew) so well.

*The setting is the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve are the central figures in an idyllic surrounding. All is peaceful. All is innocent. They are told by God that they are free to do anything except one thing. They are forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge which grows in the midst of the garden [Genesis 2:16–17]. For if they eat of the fruit they shall be driven from the garden and from that day forward they shall be responsible for their own lives. They eat of the fruit; they are driven out of the garden; they become responsible for their own lives. With the coming of knowledge, they have lost their innocence.*

*The transition from innocence to knowledge is always perilous and fraught with hazard. There is something very comforting and reassuring about innocence. To dwell in innocence is to inhabit a region where storms do not come and where all the breezes are gentle and balmy. It is to live in the calm of the eye of the hurricane. It is to live in a static environment which makes upon the individual no demands other than to be. All else is cared for; is guaranteed.*

*But when knowledge comes, the whole world is turned upside down. The meaning of things begins to emerge. And more importantly, the relations between things are seen for the first time. Questions are asked and answers are sought. A strange restlessness comes over the spirit and the enormity of error moves over the horizon like a vast shadow. Struggle emerges as the way of life. An appetite is awakened that can never be satisfied. A person becomes conscious of himself;*

*the urge to know, to understand, to find answers, turns inward. Every estimate of others becomes a question of self-estimate, every judgment upon life becomes a self-judgment. The question of the meaning of one's self becomes one with the meaning of life.*

*This process of moving from innocence to knowledge is never finished. Always there is the realm of innocence, always there is some area of innocence untouched by knowledge. The more profound the growth of knowledge, the more aware the individual becomes of the dimensions of innocence. Pride in knowledge is always tempered by the dominion of innocence.*

In our Gospel (*Matthew 15: (10-20), 21-28*) this week, we see Jesus in this place of moving from innocence to knowledge as he meets the Canaanite Woman. Jesus Incarnate, fully God and fully human, in perfect innocence yet also human and growing in knowledge was able to recognize the opportunity to grow through his encounter with a woman he momentarily excluded simply because it was the way things had always been. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.” (*Luke 2:52*)

How has your experience of this pandemic moved you from innocence to knowledge? What has been revealed to you that you had not known before? May we find hidden blessings in these days to increase in wisdom and in divine and human favor, and then like Jesus, be responsible and respond to the needs around us.