

There's Got To Be Another Way

Ephesians 1:3-14

Sunday, July 12, 2009

I've certainly thought it. Perhaps you have, too. I've probably said it. Perhaps you have, too. *There's Got To Be Another Way*. There's got to be another way than the insanity that appears to grip our world right now.

Let me stop right now. Have you thought to yourself recently: *There's Got To Be Another Way?* Or is it just me? It's not just wars around the globe. It's not just the economy. A toxic cocktail of fear, anger and mindlessness seems to have gripped the times. Did you read about the crazy traffic accident that took place in the South End the other day? A group of young people in a Jeep Cherokee had been drinking and driving and rear ended a taxi at the corner of Main and Union Streets. Neither car can have been damaged much because the Jeep Cherokee took off down Union and over to I 91 South bound – followed by an angry taxi driver. A high speed chase ensued that ended up in the Jeep flipping over and killing one of its passengers. Police flocked to the scene and closed off I 91 southbound for a couple of hours.

What was anybody *thinking?* The young people? The taxi cab driver? At any point did it occur to anybody involved to say to him or herself: *Mmmm, maybe this isn't such a good idea. Maybe...somebody's going to get hurt.*

I know. I know. I'm being naïve. What does it take to stop and say *Enough?* There was a great bumper sticker I once saw that said: *What if you stopped to think....and never started again?*

What a great question for any one of us to ask! What would it be like to stop for a moment and say.....*this is enough, I'm done.*

And what of the hysteria over Michael Jackson's death? Given – he was a man of prodigious talent. Given – he pushed the color line in ways nobody could have predicted. Given – he died a sad and pathetic figure. Is there really any more to say? Except perhaps this, which hardly applies only to Michael Jackson – *enough was never enough.*

There's got to be another way! Another way besides not paying attention – besides reactivity – besides running away from an accident – besides rage – besides the fear that somehow you're not enough. Are you with me on this? Can anybody say amen? Am I crazy to say that we live in a world that is simmering with fear and sadness and rage? Do you need more examples?

I don't think so. But there is another way.

Suppose I told you that our deepest problem lies in how we see the world? Suppose I say to you that it's not true that the world is a place to be afraid of and angry about? Suppose I say to you that we make the world that way, but it doesn't have to be? Suppose I told you, you could begin to change the world?

Listen to this. It is another way of seeing yourself and the world. Imagine for a moment that a voice comes to you not just from a book, but from deep inside you!

Listen: Blessed be God who intends the world to be holy and blameless in love and you in it. Blessed be God who sent Christ to bring you back to him because God never would let you wander out of sight. Everything you are, everything you have done is accounted for and there is nothing that you need be afraid of. Judgment has been removed. Everything and everyone is included in this plan of God's. You cannot be left out. Nothing and no-one is left out. There is no one who has more than you and no one who has less. There are no insiders and no outsiders, no winners over you and no losers because of you; no-one to rage at.

Listen again: I call you Beloved. I call you my plan. I call you to bless the world with your holiness. The world longs to hear that there is even one person who truly believes there is no reason to be afraid or angry any longer.

Can you hear that voice? It is the voice Paul speaks with in the passage from Ephesians this morning. He speaks as one who has discovered that he is Beloved in Christ and he cannot see the world any longer as a place that can hurt or destroy him.

This voice is like a telephone ringing – a cell phone singing! – a message that we keep putting on hold to answer at a later time, an easier time, a time when we are more ready to hear what the voice has to say. Eventually, however, we will all answer. But for now it is so much easier to say *I am victim of a scary world* than to say *God has already blessed me with what the whole world longs for!*

I know it sounds simplistic, but it is still true. Some day perhaps you will answer the phone and hear the voice. And then, in changing how you see the world, you will begin to save the world – at the very least you save the world from your own fear and anger! And that is where true change begins. You see, there's got to be another way! And the big shift is not in fixing the world – the world is what it is! – but in seeing the world differently and ourselves differently in it. I am not asking you to be innocent and naïve. I am not asking you to withdraw and be irresponsible! I am simply asking you to recognize that the only change that matters has to begin on the inside – of you.

As a Christian, as a follower of Jesus Christ, as people who believe that we are *in Christ* all the time, we are called to see not just what the world does – but what

God does and what God sees. God is no fool! God is not blind to the pain and suffering! God's heart breaks at what we do to each other and to ourselves.

But the difference is that God will not give up. That's the message of the cross – God allowed the world to do to Jesus what the world does – in order to show that God is not done with us, and that the rage and the sadness of the world are wiped away. You see, God is asking us to finish what Jesus began – to destroy fear – to remove rage – to pay attention to what God has *blessed* us with. Three times in this passage this morning Paul says God built this world and us in it *for the praise of his glory* – that God wants us to delight with God in the purposes of this creation. To *delight* – not to despair.

At the deepest level of our souls we are afraid that we are not truly loved – perhaps not even truly worthy of being loved – and we are angry with God for putting us in a world that is so very, very hard to love. We cover over our fear and anger by grabbing at security that cannot really secure us, competition that makes winners and losers even of the kingdom of God, and a sense that somebody else must be to blame for our plight. We end up looking and feeling tawdry, empty and unsuccessful.

There is another way. You can believe that in Christ God came to give you life to the fullest in which all things are accounted for and God is not done with you. Moreover that you can live and move and have delight in the world – even in the face of a world you cannot fix. Indeed you are not called to fix – but find ways to love and serve the world God sees as holy and blessed. That way, you will never give up.

I am trying to take on a practice of seeing the world differently. I have a really good opportunity on a weekly basis when I do laundry in the Laundromat. It's been a while since I have used the Laundromat – I go to the Liberty Laundromat on Dickinson Street – and there's a fair cross-section of humanity to be found at the Liberty Laundromat. In my visits there I have been hit up for money, cussed at because I knocked someone's socks off the table, I think I got propositioned once but the woman was pretty hung over so it was a little hard to tell.....

And then there was the motorcycle man. One late afternoon I'm figuring out how much time I need on the clothes dryers, and I'm not getting it right. I keep putting money in and the time doesn't register. I'm getting a little frustrated when a big, beefy ham of a hand reaches over and pushes the coin operation several times and for God's sake, it works.

I turn to thank the man, but he's already back at his table working on his laundry and he just nods his head. You should have seen him. Here's this big guy – about as big sideways as tall – big jeans – tent-like black t-shirt with silver dragons on it – bandana – gold earrings – neck as big as a tree trunk. And I notice that this guy whom I might have wondered whether he ever did laundry – is meticulously

matching the seams of his t-shirts, folding his underwear in neat thirds, and rolling his socks in little rows. So he finally gathers all his laundry neatly up in a basket, takes it out and straps it on the back of his black-and-silver Harley, and roars out of the parking lot.

I looked after him with a smile on the inside and said to myself: *Who woulda thought?*

And then I realized. I got it. It was like finally answering the phone. *Perhaps that's how God sees me!* Perhaps God looks at me once in a while with affection and delight and says, *So, Peter, who woulda thought?*

Amen