

PASTOR SCOTT'S

MONTHLY MESSAGE



Yep, It's "Ordinary Time"

Whew! What a time it's been. We survived Lent (six weeks without chocolate!!!). We made it through the celebration of the Risen Lord for the seven Sundays of Easter. On the Day of Pentecost we may have been touched by the Spirit (not seriously singed though). And on the following Sunday we didn't have to delve too deeply into the mystery of the Trinity and its theological significance (though I can return to that if there is an outpouring of desire to explore the Trinity more deeply).

Now here we are in June and it is clear sailing all the way until All Saints Day or Christ the King Sunday in November (with just a little turbulence from sermons about money (heaven forbid) during Stewardship season). We are in Ordinary Time in the liturgical calendar (just when you thought it was safe to use "OT" for the Old Testament, here comes another "OT").

This time is not "ordinary" as in "less spectacular, nondescript, or dull." It is "ordinary" as in "customary, regular, and orderly" (that last descriptor should be dear to our hearts as Presbyterians - "decently and in order" and all, maybe we should rename Ordinary Time "Presbyterian Time", then "OT" can go back to being short for the Old Testament). Some argue Ordinary Time could be "Ordinal Time" as in "numbered", the Latin "ordinalis," is a word meaning "showing order, denoting an order of succession."

There are actually two seasons of Ordinary Time each year – a short season post Epiphany on January 6th up to Ash Wednesday, and a longer one now, over the summer up to Advent. During Ordinary Time the lectionary focuses on Jesus' teachings and the Apostles expositions upon those teachings. We actually learn more about Jesus's ministry during OT than all the other seasons (of the 52 weeks in the year, 33-34 weeks fall into Ordinary Time each year).

Parables are a big part of Christ's teachings. We will hear and study a good number of these during Ordinary Time. When hearing a parable, we tend to interpret them from a Christological perspective, from our understanding of who Christ is. But it helps to also hear these parables as those who were listening to Christ tell them would have understood them. To those followers,

Christ had not yet been crucified and resurrected. They may have seen Jesus as a wise Rabbi, one who taught "with authority" (Mark 1:27), but probably not yet as the Son of God, as God incarnate. It took a long time for even the disciples to get to that realization.

These contemporaries of Christ were probably less likely to ascribe some of the characters in the parables as God, or even Christ himself; they were more likely to focus in on the aspects of the parables that touched their lives and day-to-day existence.

Parables convey many meanings. Like an onion they have many layers, and on each layer is a meaning/understanding (parables, like onions, may also make your eyes water – but for an entirely different reason). Each layer of an onion is just as much "onion" as any other layer, and similarly, each truth, meaning, or understandings of a parable is just as valid and important as the other meanings.

During Ordinary Time this summer and fall, when you hear a parable, in addition to what other understanding(s) may be being explored, try hearing the parable on a layer that Jesus' followers would have been on. A layer where there were no TVs, cell phones, or video games. A layer where travel was hard and dangerous, and people rarely ventured far from home. A layer where you lived in an occupied country with ample reminders of that occupation. A layer where poverty and poor health were rampant. And, a layer where there is this wonderful teacher proclaiming the Good News of God to you and other poor and ill or lame folk.

What does the parable sound like from that perspective? How does such a perspective impact how you understand the parable?

Pastor Scott