

23 Pentecost - 8 November 2009 - Proper 27 B
Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17; Hebrews 9:24-28; Mark 12:38-44
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"I was supposed to have been a Jesuit Priest or a naval academy grad. That was the way that my parents perceived me, yes those were the plans that they had. But I couldn't fit the part to dumb or to smart, ain't it funny how we all turn out. I guess we are the people our parents warned us about." These are the wise words from the great artist, singer, and songwriter, Jimmy Buffett.

Mark's gospel tells us to beware of those smart Ivy League folks in long white robes who like to have the best seats in the house and get the most recognition, and it makes me take a good look at Father Jim. He's wearing a long white robe and has the best seat in the house; I won't even get into his educational background. Then again I look in the mirror and see a good education, I am sitting next to him, and I am wearing a white robe, though it isn't quite as long.

Jesus is not saying that we as a people should not be educated. He is not saying that we should not wear long white robes if that is our attire of choice. He is not saying that we should not have long prayers. Jesus is stating that we need to be aware of our motivation. Why do we put on these robes and go to school and pray? He transitions his statement of condemnation to a mini sermon on stewardship. He sits down and watches as the collection plates are passed around and sees a widow putting two coins in the plate. This is everything she owns. She does not flaunt this act by making the coins rattle as they hit the metal plates, but humbly puts them in the collection for the synagogue. This is the key to this passage; it is this poor widow's humility and trust in God. The problem that Jesus had with the scribes was not their vocation, but their lack of humility. Their societal rank led them to believe that they were better than everyone else, they did not need to trust God; they were already set for life.

One of the interesting things is that Jesus calls the disciples over to him on the side and tells them that the widow is right in her humility and trust. She believed that God will take care of her needs. He shares it with the twelve because they are going to be future leaders of the Christian faith and are going to be sent to preach Jesus' teaching and they need to be humble when going about it. They are going to be asked to speak the truth in love with humility. Part of humility is having trust that God is working through us, just as Jesus worked through and with the disciples. Humility and trust are not easy things to embody in one's life.

When I look at this widow I wonder what she was thinking, or if she was thinking at all. My best guess is that she was so overwhelmed with trust in God that she did not think twice about putting her last two coins in the plate. This was part of the custom and the job of the synagogue, to take care of the widows. Those women had to trust humans with their livelihood. That kind of trust is hard to have. For some it seems impossible. The task we are called to perform is to trust God with all of our lives. It is to offer Him our relationships, our finances, our fears, our trouble, our selves, our souls, and our bodies.

I was doing my rounds as a chaplain at Seton Medical Center when the news broke of shooting rampage at Ft. Hood. I was walking down the hall toward my office when the chaplain in charge of the emergency room stopped me and told me what was happening. It was toward the end of my shift and we weren't sure if we were going to be getting any of the soldiers or not. I went into the office and saw the news report. A catholic priest was in there watching it when I entered. He looked up at me and said, "Susan, this is a dangerous world, you must be very careful. Even in the safest places you can be

killed." I nodded my head silently and continued watching the report. He looked at me again and said, "Death is everywhere." I nodded again. He has been a chaplain for quite sometime so I knew it was not just about the shooting, but it was a statement about the world and the life of a chaplain and as a minister of God.

He made me think about trust. Those soldiers trusted they were safe. Trust is a hard thing in this world. For some people trust is something that is earned through careful boundary filled interaction. For others trust is granted immediately and is solid until an event happens to lose that relationship of trust. I have been speaking in secular terms of trust in this part but I am going to take it a step further. I'm going to dig deeper, trust in God.

Do you test God and try to make him earn your trust or do you trust him until he doesn't come through for you in a certain situation? It seems that either of these approaches is not what God is looking for from us. He is looking for us to trust in him, no matter what. He is in control, trust him. This is working according to his eternal plan. Let me say that again because those are two very loaded sentences. God is in control, trust him. This is working according to his eternal plan. Our job is to be open enough to trust that God is faithful and allow ourselves to see him working in our lives. To allow ourselves to be open to the little "God moments" that happen to us. A God Moment is one of those moments when things just come together at the last minute, or you get that phone call you needed at just the right time, or maybe that check hits the bank right before you are overdrawn. The list goes on and on and one can fill in their own blank. The point of this is being open enough to say that it is God working in the world. It is trusting that God is working in your life. It is trusting that God is in control and he is not too busy to be involved in our lives, if we open ourselves up to the possibility. God is faithful to his creation.

This is important to remember because many people can feel abandoned by God at times in their lives. This is never the case. God wants a close, loving relationship with us. We have to be open to receiving this amazing gift. Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk wrote in his book, *Seven Story Mountain*, "But Providence, that is the love of God, is very wise in turning away from the self-will of men, and in having nothing to do with them, and leaving them to their own devices as long as they are intent on governing themselves, to show them what depths of futility and sorrow their own helplessness is capable of dragging them." This is to say that God will leave you alone if you do not want him in your life, but that is not what he intended from the beginning. God created us to love us; all he asks is that we are open to the possibility of loving him back.

God understands that it is hard for us to trust him. He understands that we have a hard time accepting unconditional love, especially when we don't seem to get much of it here between each other. It is only through grace and the power of the Holy Spirit that we are capable of understanding the need to trust God. He understands that it is very hard to trust in a sometimes very scary world.

If we look at the Old Testament reading for today we see that Naomi and Ruth were trusting and thus became the bloodline for King David and eventually Jesus Christ. God can do amazing things when we have trust and are open to the possibility of him being an active presence in our lives.

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you, and then use us we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.