

February 28, 2010 - Lent 2

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God Clears His Throat

These lessons, and specifically this Gospel, challenged me this week. I was confronted by the words in a way that I did not expect. Jesus is facing his cross and his journey to Jerusalem. He is warned by those in the know that Herod is after him. He tells them that He knows when it's going to happen and it won't happen until he gets to Jerusalem and then verse 34 grabbed me. It seemed mundane at first read, almost like poetry, but it is not. In the harshest words Jesus could find he confronts the people of Israel.

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” I hope you hear the power in those words and in this moment. It is a charge to God's people that they have resisted and continue to resist God. God has offered himself over and over and over again and they reject God over and over and over again. These are powerful words and words that call us into Lent. They are words I don't want to hear, anymore than those who listened to Jesus that day wanted to hear these words. They are words meant to convict and challenge us to confront the lie that we propagate.

In Trinity and in the church and in this great country we want to take sin and change it into morality. It is easy to do and it takes the heat off us. It is easy to be moral and point to those who are not and say, “thank you God for not making me like that”. And when we are confronted by God it is easy to

point to others and say, “they are the real sinners”, that must be what God means. They are the ones God talked about. It couldn’t be me because I am better than those real sinners out there. I am here to tell you the good news. The good news is that Jesus Christ died and rose for you. The bad news is you needed him to die and rise for you. You’re not that good. You need to hear that you have fallen short and that sin is yours because you are separated from God and you can’t just point over to the other. This Lent and this Gospel is meant for you.

I don’t know if you remember being a child and the moment that you got caught; the moment that you were “in trouble”. Maybe it was a look or a sound or something that let you know that your “sin” was clear. I remember there was a sound that my mother made and as soon as I heard that sound I knew that I had sinned and I had been caught. Mother did this (clear throat). Whenever she did that, wherever I was I knew that I was not doing what I was supposed to be doing. I can still hear her. When I was in the fifth grade and in the youth choir I was up front and poking and talking to another choir member when I heard that sound. I knew that it meant stop, look, listen and I knew that I had done wrong. And inside there was that terrible feeling; a feeling that bubbles up that lets you know that you have been caught. To this day when someone clears their throat I look around just to make sure.

As close as I can figure, God is clearing his throat this morning. It is not aimed at the person on the other side of the room. It is meant for you. If you change the words just a little then you begin to hear the truth of what Jesus was proclaiming. Trinity, Trinity why can’t you hear my call. I want to be a part of your life this day and I ask over and over again and you don’t

care. Charles, Charles I want you to be mine and you don't care. Put your name into this passage because it is meant for you. God is calling you out of your sin and into relationship with him. That is the work of Lent. That is why we are here. IT is the only way for you to know the truth of Easter. When you know your sin, your separation from God clearly; when it bubbles up from within and you have that sense of shame; then and only then can you begin to know the joy found in God's saving grace through his son Jesus Christ. It is easy to moralize. It is easy to say, "look over there at those sinners. They are not doing right and God must surely be upset at them". I pray that you will not miss your Lent. I pray that you will have an opportunity to hear how far you miss what God created you for and hopes in you. I pray that this Lent you will know that God is sad because you have not been his; because you have rejected his call. Jerusalem, Jerusalem how often I have wanted to take care of you and hold you and you are not willing.