

November 10, 2019
Homecoming:
Living Life More Abundantly

Ancient Reading ~ *Luke 19:1-10*

Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a wealthy person there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was, but he was too short to see over the crowd. In order to see Jesus, Zacchaeus ran on ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree by the side of the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way. When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I'm going to be a guest in your home today." Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and welcomed Jesus with great delight. But the people were displeased and grumbled, "Jesus has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner." Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to Jesus, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, and if I have cheated or defrauded anyone in the least, I will pay them back four times as much!" Jesus responded, "Today salvation has come to this home, for this is what it means to be a true descendant of Abraham and Sarah. The Promised One has come to search out, find and save what was lost."

Second Reading ~ *adapted from William Least Heat Moon, author of several books which chronicle unusual journeys through the United States, including cross-country trips by boat (River Horse, 1999) and, in his best known work (1982's Blue Highways), about his journey in a 1975 Ford Econoline van.*

Had I gone looking for some particular place rather than any place, I would have never found this spring under the sycamores. Since leaving home, I felt for the first time at rest. Sitting full in the moment, I practiced the challenging difficulty of just paying attention. It's a contention of my father... who believes that anyone who misses the journey misses about all that they're going to get... is that people become what they pay attention to. Our observations and our curiosity, they make us and remake us.

Third Reading

*~ adapted from Father Richard Rohr in "The Face of the Other,"
in Essential Teachings on Love*

In Jesus, God gave us a human heart we could love. While God can be described as a moral force, as consciousness, and as high vibrational energy, the truth is, we don't (or can't?) fall in love with abstractions. So God became a person "that we could hear, see with our eyes, look at, and touch with our hands" (1 John 1:1).

Jesus taught us what God is like through his words, his actions, his very being, making it clear that "God is love" (1 John 4:8,16). If God is Trinity and Jesus is the face of God, then it is indeed a benevolent universe — at its very core.

The brilliant Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Lévinas (1906-1995), said the only thing that really converts people, the ultimate moral imperative, is "the face of the other." He developed this concept at great length and with great persuasion. When we receive and empathize with the face of the other (especially the suffering face), it leads to transformation of our whole being. It creates a moral demand on our heart that is far more compelling than the Ten Commandments. Just giving people commandments on tablets of stone doesn't change the heart. It may steel the will, but it doesn't soften the heart. transform, and remake us like a personal encounter can.