

The Mercy That Adds Us To One Another

I have been pondering where we are as a country with the pandemic and the consequent deaths and anxiety as well as the continuing political divisions and our nation's imbedded racial injustice. There's also the scarcity of the vaccine and the uneven adherence to wearing masks and keeping social distance. There's the ache and frustration we feel over not being able to worship together. Then there's the image of D.C. on January 6 that haunts us: men and women attempting to take over the Capitol of the United States.

As I not only thought about all this but also felt an ache in my heart and a bewilderment in my brain, I remembered reading a prose poem decades ago (I think the author is John Ciardi). Yet despite the time gap, those words come back to me -- especially in these times. Here's a section of the piece:

"Caught as we are in these and our other conditions.

Which include a distaste for the littleness of our motives, and, therefore, some wish to live toward some reality. Terrified by realities. Addicted to evasions. Daring, perhaps once, to look into the mirror and see and not look away.

Beginning again, then, with those who share with us and with whom we share the sorrows of the common failure. Fumbling at last to the language of a sympathy that can describe, and that will be, we are persuaded, sufficiently joy when we find in one another its idioms.

Caught as we are in these defining conditions --

I wish us the one fact of ourselves that is inexhaustible and which, therefore, we need not horde nor begrudge.

Let mercy be its name till its name be found. And wish that to the mercy that is possible because it takes nothing from us and may, therefore, be given indifferently, there be joined the mercy that adds us to one another."

"Mercy" in the scripture is "Hesed" which is a fierce love -- a love that holds on regardless of political divisions and the consequences of a pandemic. Hesed is the love of the shepherd who goes after the lost sheep -- regardless of their political party. It's the love that moved Jesus to bring

Lazarus back from death. It's the love that moved the woman on the street to go inside the Pharisee's house to wash Jesus' feet with her hair. It's the love that pushed the friends of a crippled man to cut a hole in the roof of the house where Jesus was so he could be healed.

This love -- this *Hesed* -- is the cure for our "defining conditions." It's the way God's mercy adds us to one another. We are called to follow Jesus. Therefore, we must remember and imitate his love, which means repairing the divisions between us.

May we as followers of the Christ remember that Jesus always comes after us wherever we are. I have a sticker from London that says, "Mind the Gap," but I am throwing the sticker away. I don't want to mind the gap; I want to cross it because that's what the Lord has done for me and commands me and all his followers to do for others. Like the poet, I wish for our diocese the one fact of ourselves that is inexhaustible; that is mercy.

-- Bishop Porter Taylor