

A Sermon for July 30, 2017 Proper 12 Year A RCL
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I do not know how to go out or come in. ... Give your servant therefore an understanding mind ...
able to discern between good and evil; 1 Kings 3:7a, 9

For I am convinced that....Nothing in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 8:39

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*This sermon is highly influenced by the week before last....at the Native Ministries Consortium of the Vancouver School of Theology, where I had a rare opportunity to ponder how the Good News is heard by, and lived out among Aboriginal people of Canada and the US.]*

1.) If we had one of those reader boards outside, the kind where they put up the sermon title every week, the ones that show up on face book saying things to lure us in, I would have suggested only one word for today:

**NOTHING**

It's about the "nothing" that can separate us from the Love of God in Christ". Nothing. ...about that "Let nothing disturb you...., God alone is enough." from the Communion Song, *Nada te turbe*, from the prayer of Teresa of Avila. That song in Spanish is not a statement...as the English says, "Nothing can trouble."

No, Teresa's prayer like the faith of Solomon, Paul and Jesus is much more realistic. There is actually a lot that can trouble, and disturb us, but the song is an exhortation that we offer to each other, "Let nothing disturb, undo or frighten you. Those who have God, lack nothing. Only God is enough."

This "nothing" is much more easily talked about than lived.

As challenging as this "nothing" is, I don't hear these lessons as something that is truly impossible for us. Difficult, yes. Challenging, yes. And most of all, nothing about this "nothing" is meant to put us in a place where we are caught and can't move. It's not a trap. Rather, this is a *strong dose of realistic faith*, as we find it in Solomon, Paul's Letter to Rome and the Good News of Jesus as found in Matthew.

– steeped in humility, fortified with courage and wisdom seeking understanding,  
all tied up with daring hope...the kind we now need.

-- Faith that is very much Faith, even in its incompleteness, the not-yet-ness of our faith

These are lessons that speak to the choices we have to make, and help us to deal wisely with complications of those choices. (How to feed the Good Wolf, instead of the Bad Wolf.)

2.) **I don't want to assume**, yet hope that I am not the only one, who from time to time, and sometimes, more than at others...

At times, I do feel "separated" from that Love.

(or perhaps, that the connection is not as strong as it has been or I'd like / need it to be. And yes, this does sound as though I taking about an Internet connection...one bar, etc. But it's a much broader, and more important connection than that.)

I suppose that we all have our own lists of those things that deeply disturb us. that might separate us from, loosen, or strengthen our connection to that Love of God in Christ, So, as we all know, it's not "nothing" that is doing the separating or distancing. More like everything.

As our Bishop Greg said last week when he spoke of the Good Wolf and the Bad Wolf, we have some choices about which wolf to feed, the kind of choices that help to strength or loosen that connection.

Such choices contribute to what the Apostle Paul calls  
"Living in the Spirit", a freeing kind of life that brings about yet more life  
VS.  
living that binds up and shuts down life for ourselves and others.

And, as Bishop Greg made very clear, all of us are dealing with all sides of these choices, all along the way of our spiritual lives.

Under the influence of my week at the Native Ministries Consortium as a Tutor in a course on Indigenous and Non-indigenous perspectives on Pilgrimage and Journey, I've come to think of these matters within the context of a journey. And these choices as a negotiation of the intersection of Hardship and Beauty.

### 3.) At the Intersection of Hardship & Beauty

These reflections about "nothing" are one way to ponder negotiating that intersection.

| The intersection of Hardship and Beauty                                                                    |            |                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Hardship<br/>Distance<br/>Persecution<br/>Famine / Gluttony<br/>Peril /<br/>Violence / Indifference</b> | <b>AND</b> | <b>That place where "those who have God lack nothing" , that place of the many "beauties of the earth, the hour, of human" love, of God's many gifts to us are more than enough!</b> |

This intersection is not an easy one to negotiate.

**Hardship** Paul expresses so well in our reading from Romans.

**Beauty**, is what we will soon hear sung as the Offertory Music, "For the Beauty of the earth." The words to that song are found in the Hymnal at #416.

**Refrain:** Lord of all, to thee we raise This our joyful hymn of praise

For the beauty of the earth  
For the beauty of the skies  
For the love which from our birth  
Over and around us lies  
Over and around us lies

**Refrain**

For the joy of human love  
Brother, sister, parent, child  
Friends on earth and friends above  
For all gentle thoughts and mild  
For all gentle thoughts and mild

**Refrain**

For the beauty of the hour  
Of the day and of the night  
Hill and vale and tree and flower  
Sun and moon and stars of light  
Sun and moon and stars of light

**Refrain**

For each perfect gift of thine  
To our race so freely given  
Graces human and divine  
Flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n  
Flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n

**Refrain**

This Intersection of Hardship and Beauty is the kind of place where "living in the Spirit" that Paul writes about is demonstrated by the way neither direction entirely ignores the other. It's that kind of place where faith *persists*; where *both* Hardship AND "the Beauty of the Earth" are part of the process, the worldview, and the practice.

This intersection is not an easy one to negotiate. The temptation is to go down one way or the other, as though the other way were not there, as though Faith were about only one or the other.

Neither, Solomon, Paul, nor Jesus solves the difficulty of negotiating this intersection by ignoring one side or the other – **neither**: the hardship, distance part nor the Beauty of the earth that is more than enough for those who have God. Faith does not see only Beauty and ignore Hardship, rather it holds the two together.

The Apostle Paul is good at that, trying to hold disparate communities together. He manages in various of his writings to speak to the *entire* community, -- here in Romans he writes to a "mixed congregation" Gentile Christians *and* Jewish Christians --at all ends of the continuum, and then somehow from that wide embrace, move them gently toward each other.

#### **4.) So, who is the "us" who are not separated from this love of God in Christ?**

Perhaps you figured this out long ago? I've been treasuring these verses about "nothing" since I was a teen ager. They mean a great deal to me; but then in the past it was mostly that... "to me". When I heard first heard these verses I was in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and I heard them as being about "my connection" to the Love of God in Christ. Then, I

did not hear this daring claim as belonging to a group, to "us".

So, who is the "us" who are not separated from the love of God in Christ?

Today, I hear Paul, and Jesus saying...something to the effect that "the love of God in Christ" connects us" in several ways. For Paul, it meant that this love connected Gentile and Jewish Christians, In the Parables of Jesus, we hear of the Reign of God that includes men and women, people who plant, make bread, fishermen, farmers, land owners. This love connects us, one-by-one to God, and it also binds us to our true selves, to each other, to other people we do not know, and to the whole Creation without which we would not exist.

This is some magnificent connection with the Holy One!

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| <p><b>5.)</b> <i>Nurturing our connections with God and each other, in order to negotiate the intersection of Hardship with Beauty.</i></p> |
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Three things that help us negotiate the intersection, and strengthen the connection to God: Humility, Asking for Help from God and from each other, and Extreme Language

**A.) Humility of Solomon: "I do not know how to go out or come in..."**

The truly wise know that they do not know. Solomon is usually thought of in terms of to "wisdom". But here, his wisdom is clearly demonstrated by his humility, the humility to say, and "I don't know how to do X!" Such a statement may appear of little importance, but it seems that such a simple declaration of openness to an Other (human or divine) is a very big deal. Humility makes it possible to locate our blind spots. It opens up the relationships, and allows the conversations to speak and hear something new. Humility allows us to collaborate with others, engage mutually and respectfully with those who differ from ourselves.

This humility is a prerequisite for Solomon's wisdom. Wisdom and understanding simply do not exist apart from humility. It takes a lot of humility to stand at that intersection of hardship and Beauty and not turn in one direction at the expense of the other forgetting that both the directions of Hardship and Beauty may bring us to wisdom. In both cases we are humbled / moved beyond ourselves by the magnitude of suffering, OR the beauty and great love and opened by the kind of life that generates more life, Paul's Life in the Spirit.

**B.) Asking for help** from God and from each other  
...to be able to tell the difference, to discern good and evil...

to tell the difference between those things that separate and those that pull us apart... That's a big part of what we do here for and with each other. Such asking may NOT be so much about getting some correct answer from someone else, including God, as it is to undo the illusion that any one of us has it all figured out, and that we don't need each other or God.

Asking is a declaration of our need for each other; of our willingness to trust each other and to be in relation. We find a powerful example of such asking in the Book of Common Prayer, pg. 836.

“We thank you for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone. Pg. 836 BCP

### **C.) Extreme Language – Hyperbole, ETC!!!**

I'm also beginning to see that I/ we might want to reconsider my/our aversion to **hyperbole**.

Sometimes Scripture works by modelling for us something we need to learn how to do. It allows us to be “the fly on the wall” in settings that are beyond our experience, understanding and wisdom. Such reading allows us to explore things we are yet to understand. They do so by putting us in a place to witness something we do not yet understand – faith, suffering, grace, forgiveness. Such as Solomon's dream, Paul's letter to Rome or these powerful parables of Jesus on the Reign of God. Extreme language.

Such reading lets us practice hearing Extreme Language so that we might eventually have the wisdom to understand why someone would use such LARGE language ... (when it may not yet make sense to us.) This is something that I learned during that week at VST. There with Indigenous people from BC, Haida Gwaii, Granville Island / Snaqu, Cree people from the middle of Canada, others who have worked with homeless Aboriginal people on the streets of Vancouver for many years. These are people whose lives are marked by both hardship and beauty, and often a whole lot more hardship that we understand. One of my colleagues made the comment that when people are deeply soaked in Hardship OR beauty, they simply cannot use any other kind of language. The situation is too intense, other words are too small. Thus, paying attention to such Extreme Language may become a way to learn to understand others we do not yet know or understand. We may learn a lot.

And when we consider it, Extreme Language is what we find in:

Solomon's Dream    Paul's letter to Rome    Jesus Parables...

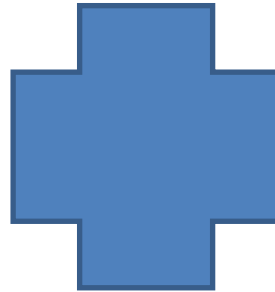
#### **“The kingdom of heaven is like...**

**a mustard seed** (male) & **yeast** that a woman took  
**treasure hidden in a field,**

**a net that was thrown into the sea** and caught fish of every kind; ... **and separate the evil from the righteous**  
**master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”**

If we can learn how to listen to such language, and that is no small thing, we may get an idea of how others get through that intersection of (Hardship and Beauty, we may come to see a bit more of how others manage to maintain their connections to God in both Hardship and in Beauty.

The Communion Song, *Nada te turbe*, is by Teresa de Avila...is a prayer of exhortation that we might pray for and with each other. It is a declaration of Realistic Faith that manages to negotiate the Intersection of Hardship and Beauty, not by ignoring either side, but by holding them together:



Nada te turbe,  
nada te espante,  
quien a Dios tiene  
nada le falta:  
Sólo Dios basta.

May nothing disturb you,  
let nothing frighten you,  
the one who has God,  
lacks nothing:  
Only God is enough.

**AMEN.**



<http://www.joanszymko.com/works/ind/nada-te-turbe> another musical version)

**Nada te turbe**

<http://lyricstranslate.com/en/nada-te-turbe-let-nothing-disturb-you.html>  
Let nothing disturb you

Let nothing disturb you,  
let nothing frighten you,  
everything passes,  
but God stays.  
Patience reaches it all;  
one who has God  
nothing lacks:  
God alone suffices.

Lift your thinking,  
raise up to heaven,  
let nothing anguish you,  
let nothing disturb you.

Follow Jesus Christ  
with an open heart,  
and, no matter what may come,  
let nothing frighten you.

See the glory of the world?  
It's vainglory;  
it is not everlasting,  
everything passes.

Yearn for the celestial  
that lasts forever:  
faithful and rich in promises,  
God doesn't change.  
Love it the way it deserves  
immense kindness;  
but there is not fine love  
without the patience.

Confidence and alive faith  
let the soul maintain,  
that one who believes and hopes  
reaches it all.

Although harassed by hell  
one may see oneself,  
one who has God  
will defeat its rage.

Come abandonment,  
crosses, misfortune;  
God being your treasure,  
you lack nothing.

Go, then, worldly goods  
go, vain happiness;  
even if everything is lost  
God alone suffices.

Submitted by roster 31 on Thu, 16/01/2014 - 19:32

Author's comments: This is not an easy translation.  
It is a poem, as well as a prayer, from the XVI  
century, addressed to everyone. The structure is  
peculiar: for the most part, the verb precedes the  
subject, and, following the original poem, I have  
tried to keep it that way.

1. It could be "waits"

2. This stanza, for me, has been the most  
complicated. I hope the interpretation is clear.

3. This stanza could be personalized, as an  
answer to the message, by saying:

"Go, then, worldly goods  
go, vain happiness;  
even if I lose everything,  
God alone suffices."

#### **Spanish**

Nada te turbe Nada te turbe,  
nada te espante, todo se pasa,

Dios no se muda; la paciencia  
todo lo alcanza;  
quien a Dios tiene nada le falta:  
Sólo Dios basta.

Eleva tu pensamiento, al cielo sube,  
por nada te acongojes, nada te turbe.

A Jesucristo sigue con pecho grande,  
y, venga lo que venga, nada te espante.

¿Ves la gloria del mundo? Es gloria vana;  
nada tiene de estable, todo se pasa.

Aspira a lo celeste, que siempre dura;  
fiel y rico en promesas, Dios no se muda.

Ámala cual merece bondad inmensa;  
pero no hay amor fino sin la paciencia.

Confianza y fe viva mantenga el alma,  
que quien cree y espera todo lo alcanza.

Del infierno acosado aunque se viere,  
burlará sus furors quien a Dios tiene.

Vénganle desamparos, cruces, desgracias;  
siendo Dios tu Tesoro nada te falta.

Id, pues, bienes del mundo; id dichas vanas;  
aunque todo lo pierda, sólo Dios basta.