

A sermon preached by Tuck Bowerfind, Grace Episcopal Church, Lexington, the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, July 12, 2020 Proper 9 year A

Last Saturday Delea, Elizabeth, Nellie and I went out to a familiar bend of the Calfpasture River to loll on the warm stones and bathe in the cool water. We had hoped that George and Dorothy and even Tiffany, Matt and Archer would be with us. But for the Covid.

Heading back through the woods I thought I could hear the river beside us speaking, and I asked myself what is the river saying to me, saying to us? And what I thought I heard was Come unto me all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will refresh you.

There is a children's story about a little girl named Sophie. Sophie finishes playing with gorilla and sets it aside. Her little brother takes gorilla while Sophie is busy with some other toy. All is well. Until Sophie suddenly notices little brother playing with gorilla. And she grabs it back saying Mine. Brother weeps and wails. Until mom intervenes and, reminding Sophie that she had her turn, takes gorilla and hands it to little brother.

The author describes and the artist shows Sophie's transformation into a human volcano. Sophie explodes with anger. But there is nothing she can do about gorilla or brother or mother so...

She stomps out of the house slamming the door and seems to wander through woods until she reaches what we realize is a familiar spot. A large tree Sophie has been to many times before. So many times that mother no longer follows or calls.

The artist shows us Sophie sitting in the tree facing the water off Cape Cod and the author writes: the wide world comforts her.

In time Sophie returns home able to play with her brother in peace, even though he still has the gorilla. It is never really about the gorilla.

We have been at this pandemic thing for four months now. Not four hundred years. But these four months have taught us all something about the frustration and hopelessness and anger of lost agency and independence. We did as we were told. We gave up our lives. The curve flattened. And now we are ready to take back control of our lives again. (And there are many voices out there protesting and demanding a share. And do they get to protest?) But how do we take it back agency in a way that restores and builds up the household? How do we express anger and frustration without destroying one another, or without lapsing into hopelessness and despair?

Jesus tells us to come to him.

If there has ever been a come to Jesus moment this is one.

What does this mean to come to Jesus?

It clearly does not mean simply accepting the world as it is. The world as Jesus shows us is fickle and blind. The world does not recognize the truth.

The world keeps misjudging, prejudging, categorizing and stereotyping, reducing the maker of heaven and earth to a sound bite or a weapon.

The world throws jargon around. The world calls names. Republicans and Democrats. Marxists and Libertarians. Blacks and Whites. And we dance. We get distracted by flags and statues. We begin to argue over who owns the truth. But the truth lies deeper.

Truth, is a relationship. The relationship between the father and the son. Truth is humble, not strident, truth is gentle, truth is an easy yoke. Truth is like Rebecca arriving both to comfort a traumatized Isaac and to shepherd the promise of God.

Truth will not allow us to deny the full humanity and dignity of every other person. Truth will make sure the blessing is passed down to the child that knows its worth. Truth will keep people of good will from turning against and devouring each other. Truth will not allow us to simply deny reality or complacently accept it: neither the reality of the corona virus, nor the reality of racism, nor the reality of sin.

Truth can and will comfort us, as Rebecca comforted a traumatized Isaac. And truth will shepherd the promise of God as Rebecca will guide Isaac's unseeing hand to the head of Jacob because.

Truth will comfort us too, like the river, like the wide world. But not simply to stay as we are. Truth is always sending us out to work, calling us home to build the beloved community. Not just to get what we want.

Truth will continue to shepherd those who come to her she has for four thousand years through every sort of human frailty. Oh that today we see, oh that today we would hearken to her voice.