

June 6, 2021. Second Sunday after Pentecost.

Welcome, friends, to our worship this Sunday, June 6th.

We begin in the name of God, Abba Imma, Son and Holy Spirit.

O God pour out, your wisdom and grace upon us that we might respond with open hearts to your invitation to become human, through the compassion of your Christ. We pray in his name.

Rich, rich texts for us today, the first from **Genesis chapter 3. [Gen 3: 8-15]**

Adam and Eve heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid from God among the trees of the garden. But God called to Adam and said, "Where are you?" Adam replied, "I heard the sound as you were, walking in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself." God answered, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree which I forbade you?" Adam said, "The woman you gave me for a companion, she gave me the fruit of the tree and I ate it." The Lord God said to Eve, "What is this that you have done?" Eve said, "The serpent tricked, me and I ate."

And God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than the cattle and wild creatures. On your belly you shall crawl and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your brood and her offspring. They shall strike at your head, and you will strike at their heels."

Psalm 130 is appointed for today.

Out of the Depths

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord;
let me feel you even in this darkness.
Take away my affliction
or give me the strength to endure.

If all our mistakes were indelible,
who of us could survive?
But you have forgiven us, even
when we cannot forgive ourselves.

I listen for you; my soul
listens like a deer in the forest.
My soul waits more intently
than a soldier waiting for the dawn.

Answer me; open my heart
so that I can wholly receive you.
And teach me that when I am ready,
you will let this suffering pass.

Praise to the God who is. Praise to God who was. Praise to the God who is to
come for ages unending.

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From **2nd Corinthians. [2 Cor. 4:16-5:1]**

*Paul writes, "No wonder we do not lose heart! Though our outward nature is
decaying, yet day by day we are inwardly renewed. Our troubles are slight and
short-lived; and their outcome is an eternal weight of glory, which outweighs all
our troubles by far. Meanwhile, our eyes are fixed, not on the things that are seen,
but on the things that are unseen: for what is seen passes away; what is unseen is
eternal. For we know that if the earthly frame that houses us today should be
demolished, we possess a building which God has provided--a home not made by
human hands, but one eternal and in God's presence.*

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The gospel of **Mark, chapter 3. [Mk 3:20-30]**

*Jesus entered a house, and once more such a crowd collected around them that
they had no chance to eat. When his family heard of this, they set out to take
charge of Jesus, for people were saying, 'He is out of his mind'. The doctors of the
law had come down from Jerusalem and they said, 'He is possessed by Beelzebub',
and 'He drives out devils by the prince of the devils.'*

So Jesus called them to come forward, and he spoke to them in this way.

*'How can Satan drive out Satan? If a nation is divided against itself, that nation
cannot stand; if a family is divided against itself, that family will never stand; and
if Satan is in rebellion against Satan, he is divided and cannot stand; and that is
the end of him.*

On the other hand, no one can break into a strong man's home and make off with his goods, unless you have first tied the strong man up; then, then you can ransack the house.

I tell you this: no sin, no slander, is beyond forgiveness for people; but whoever slanders the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven; that one is guilty of an eternal sin.' Jesus said this because they had declared that he was possessed by an unclean spirit.

The word of God. Praise to you, O God.

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In the name of God, Abba Imma, Son and Holy Spirit.

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child. This great blues song conveys the spirit of Psalm 130: *Out of the depths have I cried to you, O God. Out of the depths.*

We have known that communally in this past year, with all the sufferings that have been endured. 'Out of the depths' experienced in a new kind of way in our lifetime.

This week, June 1st, marked the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Massacre, back in 1921. That Greenwood area of Tulsa was also known as the Black Wall Street, the most successful economic black community in its day. And for no reason at all--racial tensions and hatred all around, yes,--but for no reason at all forty square blocks of 'Black Wall Street' was utterly destroyed on June 1st. A dozen airplanes were used to drop incendiary bombs on this neighborhood. It was the first time that Americans used airplanes to drop bombs on Americans. 100 to 300 people were murdered--men, women and children--their bodies tossed into mass graves and unmarked. No funeral services.

Out of the depths have we cried to you.

In the Genesis story today, we hear Adam and Eve approached by God in the cool of the day. And God asks, 'Where are you?' This is not a hide-and-seek question. In Hebrew it's very clear--this is an existential question: Where are you? What's happening to you?

Why do Adam and Eve discover that they're naked after having lunch? Well, Adam blames Eve, of course. But if we really look at the story, either Adam had no backbone with which to stand up to Eve, or else he's so weak-minded he didn't know he was being manipulated.

God turns to Eve, 'Why?' She passes it on as well--'It was the snake', and the

snake is punished. This is the first and most ancient story of scapegoating.

'Don't look at me!'

Out of the depths have we cried to you.

On June 2nd of this week, we here at Peace marked the 30th anniversary of our becoming a 'Reconciled in Christ' congregation, when we officially welcomed gay and lesbian people to every aspect of life in this congregation, 30 years ago. I am quite sure that we were the first suburban congregation, to become RIC, as it's known. How many people have cried out for their lives as gay and lesbian folks, trying to be understood and welcomed as human, wanting only to love who they love.

Out of the depths.

And on June 1st this week, Tiananmen Square occurred, in 1989. We all remember this image of the young man standing in front of all those tanks, stopping them in their tracks. It was an act of conscience and integrity. It is an act of non-violence, beckoning the humanity of the soldiers, in this case, or the government.

The Chinese economy (??) is praised for so many accomplishments, but none come near matching that active, conscious, declaration of my humanity in inviting you to become human with me. It is presumed that this young man, though taken back into the crowd, was eventually executed.

This week, my daughter-in-law, Kylie, and I were speaking about the Tulsa Massacre, having witnessed some footage on the History Channel. And she said, "History just seems to be one great tragedy after another." And I said, "Yes that is true, except, except, that we are constantly sowing seeds--either seeds of destruction, or, seeds of hope and healing, in this present time. And, it is those seeds sown which produce the results we experience. The future doesn't just come out of nowhere--it doesn't. The future is harvested from the choices and seeds we have sown in the present."

Is there any hope? Is there any alternative to the ancient game of scapegoating, begun so long ago by our great-great ancestors? We have, in Corinthians today, this marvelous declaration by St. Paul, *'We do not lose heart! We do not lose heart, for though our outer nature is decaying, our inner nature is being renewed.'*

Usually, we think this text refers to just our own bodies and lives, but the corruption and the decay that he is addressing is also being experienced by everything else within creation—structures, and systems, and organizations.

All are prone to corruption, theology, education, the arts, all are prone to being taken down, worn down. And the vitality of which they were initiated, great ideas, is betrayed over the course of time. Therefore it is extremely important for us to nurture and to care for our inner self, to cultivate that awareness, that attunement to the Holy Spirit, who keeps our hearts focused on what is crucial, even though it is unseen.

Can you imagine what Jesus felt when he learned that his family was coming to fetch him because they thought 'He is out of his mind'? Have you ever been accused of that? Think back on those situations when people say, 'You're not in your right mind. What are you doing?'

Jesus is attacked and called Satan, the source of evil and wickedness.
Isn't that what the black people of Tulsa experienced?
Isn't that what gay and lesbian people have experienced?
Isn't that attack what the Chinese students and protesters experienced?
*You are the source of evil and wickedness. Therefore, you are disposable.
You are not human, and you are not one of us.*

Jesus, brilliant, demands: Can a nation divided stand? Can a family divided stand? And many of us are experiencing that these days, aren't we? Can Satan turn on himself?

Those who abuse power, those who sow seeds of hate, division, and deceit, always accuse their opponents of causing divisions. It's an ancient tradition: you blame others for causing the divisions, the problems, especially when they are weak, or vulnerable, or impoverished.

If black people, and gay people, and Chinese students were simply quiet, everything would be fine, wouldn't it? Why did they have to make such a commotion about everything? Just get along.

And Jesus being attacked as a liar who was slandering God--and that is the charge which eventually gets him crucified—'He is lying about God'. Jesus says all slander can be forgiven except slander against the Holy Spirit, who inspires Truth. That is, we are rejecting the truth, and its possibility, when we reject the Holy Spirit.

That's why this nurturing of our inner being and inner life is so essential, so that we can be touched and refreshed by the truth, frequently. Without it and that

Holy Spirit's inspiration, we are left in the dark.

Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O God, out of the depths.

May we cry out to the one who hears us, and may we hear the cries of those who are crying out to us. Amen.

[Dr. Ellen Foster Randall sings:

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
A long way from home, a long way from home.

Sometimes I feel like I'm almost done,
Sometimes I feel like I'm almost done,
Sometimes I feel like I'm almost done,
And a long, long way from home, a long way from home.

When I get down on my knees and pray,
When I get down on my knees and pray,
When I get down on my knees and pray
A long way from home, a long way from home.

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
a long way from home, a long way from home.]
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The peace, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

O God, we pray today for all in need of your Holy Spirit, for the nurturing of our inner lives that we might hear your beckoning, hear your calls to truth, compassion, for those in need.

Bless Ralph in his time of need; bless those who love him, give them your strength and presence,
Bless Margit as she recovers at home,
Bless all the friends whom we name in our hearts now before you.

And we pray that you would bless us with the wisdom, the courage and grace to address atrocities of our time.
For all those murdered in the massacre of Tulsa,
God, your mercy upon them.

For the burying of this story for a hundred years,
God, in your mercy, be gracious to us.

And now opening our hearts to the vast receptivity of your grace, which welcomes
all—

Bless gay, lesbian, black, people of color, those cut off from life, all who are your
children and hold them in the wholeness of your love for which Christ gave his
life, for which he was called a liar about the grand embrace of your grace.

Bless us, we pray, with your Holy Spirit of truth, to ever enter into your heart of
love. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious
to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

[Service concludes with a verse from the *Motherless Child*, sung by Dr. Ellen
Randles]