

## *Boldly Serving*

*Isaiah 43: 16-21; John 12: 1-8*

Throughout Lent we have been exploring Christian rituals. We've been thinking of them both as steps along the way of our faith and containers, places we can take our most troubling times and our most exciting times, to remind ourselves that we are safe amid them. A ritual is something that is passed down through culture and language and this week, this final week of Lent we have turned to anointing and the laying on of hands.

The anointing and laying on of hands are two of the ways Christians have been healing each other. As the story told this morning, this was first done in Christian community with oil for Jesus.

While it is truly Spring now, you can remember if you spent the Winter in Edmonton that feeling you get that your skin has shrunk a couple of sizes and everything is dry and the difference that one drop of oil or cream or water can make. So, we use anointing to remind ourselves that no matter how we are today, we are held in the safety of God's love which comes, as our Scriptures say, like waters to a desert.

We need these rituals because part of following Jesus means we realize that our shoes are too small. And by that, I mean that all the rules that we learn at school and in families and in church need to be explored and questioned and pondered turned upside down and then re-examined.

Some of the values that we have learned in our past we will hold onto. For example, I learned that the most valuable thing to purchase is a ticket to a music concert. There was a special box in my mom's drawer that I had to ask permission to look into, but it was known as 'The Ticket Box' and it held the tickets to the next concert we got to go to and any time I complained that we were having tomato soup again or that tuna was not a five day-a-week fish - my mom would say, "And yet this tuna is bringing us to Friday, when we will be able to go to (if you are old enough to remember this theater) the Alberta Museum." In the old museum, in a tiny theatre in the basement. That is where I saw Rita MacNeil take off her shoes as she always did after the first song. It's where I saw Spirit of the West when they were so un-famous that they had to meet us afterwards to sell their albums, so we got to talk to them. Luckily there were five of them and four in my family, so we just split them up accordingly. To this day, I have my own ticket box.

This is the value that was taught to me and every time I turn it around and re-examine, I decide yep, I am keeping that one.

There are also things we learn, not because our parents are bad, but because they learned certain things from their parents and at a certain point some things become too limiting. We learned new things and the common sense answer no longer makes sense.

I am not one of those people who thinks beyond, but if you can think of Galileo. . how on God's green earth did Galileo think, 'Well, it looks flat, it acts flat; so, it must be round.' That is the kind of brains we need. The kind of brain that says just because common sense says so, and even my experience says so, there is something bigger.

There is something bigger than binary, there is something bigger than just take care of yourself, something bigger than prosperity first. So as we grow out of one common sense and into a new, something you should probably expect to do approximately 75-80 times in your life, yes that's once a year, it may get uncomfortable and you begin to think what if all I know is wrong and I still have to learn everything that's true again.

Well that's when we remember that this pattern, this re-look, re-examine, turn upside down and explore is the Holy Please, the Way. That is how Creation happened. God did not take one look at the amoeba and say, yeah that's good, we'll just leave it there. God thought nope, no we need fruit, we need water, lights and darks. We need diversity.

Our Scriptures today also remind us that we will not be the first person in the history of the Christian community that someone turned to and said, 'I can not believe you did that.' And whenever someone says, 'I can't believe you did that,' you can say, 'I learned how to do it in the Bible. I was at church and they said you pick your favorite smell and you take care of your friend if they are sad. You pick your favorite song and you sing it loud. You pick a church that feels like home and you say yes.'

Thanks be to God for communities where we can experience ritual, whether we are in tears or in laughter. Amen.