Psalm 100 - The New Testament and Psalms, An Inclusive Version

Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth.

Worship God with gladness; come into God’s presence with singing.

Know that the Most High is God. It is God who made us, and to God we belong; we are God’s people, and the sheep of God’s pasture.

Enter God’s gates with thanksgiving, and God’s courts with praise.

Give thanks to God, bless God’s name.

For God is good; God’s steadfast love endures forever, and God’s faithfulness to all generations.

The Good News - Thich Nhat Hanh

In Call Me By My True Names

(Spiritual Literacy, Reading the Sacred in Everyday Like

Frederic and Many Ann Brussat)

The good news

They do not print.

The good news

We do print.

We have a special edition every moment;

And we need you to read it.

The good news is that you are alive,

That the linden tree is still there,

Standing firm in the harsh Winter.

The good news is that you have wonderful eyes

To touch the blue sky.

The good news is that your child is there before you,

And your arms are available:

Hugging is possible.

They only print what is wrong.

Look at each of our special editions.

We always offer the things that are not wrong.

We want you to benefit from them

And help protect them.

The dandelion is there by the sidewalk,

Smiling its wondrous smile,

Singing the song of eternity.

Listen! You have ears that can hear it.

Bow your head.

Listen to it.

Leave behind the world of sorrow

And preoccupation and get free,

The latest good news

Is that your can do it.

I chose these two readings this evening because they are two of my favorite texts. The Psalm and the poem from Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Thien Buddhist monk and peace activist, remind me that joy surrounds us and that all we have to do is open our eyes and look or stay still for a moment and listen. Joyful noise for me is many things; the sound of lawn mowers which I equate to the sound of boats speeding on the bay; voices raised in song, sometimes off key and off the beat and sometimes gloriously trained; the sound of conversation and laughter over a shared meal; the sounds of our worship together; the sound of silence rich in possibility.

I have to confess that I have not been finding or contributing to joyful noise. I find myself, especially in the quiet moments of my day, and there are a lot of them, focusing on the continually bad news we receive via national and social media streams. Feeling sad and tearful, frustrated and angry, tired and irritable. Where was the joy? Last week, Kathleen spoke about the practice of Metta.

“May you be filled with loving kindness.

May you be safe from inner and outer dangers.

May you be well in body and mind.

May you be at ease and happy.”

The practice of Metta in some ways is taking a breath or three before speaking. Metta allows me to practice a bit of self-control and diminishes the likelihood of a explosion of a stream of quite often graphic language.

I need to focus on the good news, the joyful noise of the word around me. That’s not to say that the bad news will be ignored but rather it will not be my focus. In this extraordinary time of pandemic, we grieve for lives lost, we struggle financially, emotionally, and spiritually. Yet we also need to seek and hear the good news. People have recovered from the virus, advancements in treatment and in developing a vaccine move forward. The artistic creativity that has blossomed in the midst of this pandemic is just one example of the gift of God’s good news and grace in the world.

As Christians, we believe that God’s grace is abundant, that God’s steadfast love surrounds and supports us, as we love and support each other; even when we may not agree or like the other.

Mitch Finley writes in the Whispers of love about Christian doctrine; He states:

The Christian doctrine

Of the community of saints

Is simple really.

All it says is

That once you buy the farm

You still live on the farm.

All it says is

That those who have gone before us

Are still with us.

All it says is

That past generations

Still count

And must be taken into account

In other words,

We’re all in this together

All of us.

We are the communion of saints, we are the good news, and we must make a joyful noise.

Opening Prayer - Janet Morley in Dancing On Mountains

 An Anthology of Women’s Spiritual Readings

 Kathy Kay

Spirit of truth,

Whom the world can never grasp,

Touch our hearts

With the shock of your coming;

Fill us with desire

For you disturbing peace;

And fire us with longing

To speak your uncontainable word

Through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Closing Prayer - Ted Loder/ Guerrillas of Grace

Ted Loder is a Retired Methodist Minister and a political and spiritual activist.

O God of gifts

Quicken in us a sense of homer

Bright enough to help us find our way

In these tarnished times

Fruitful enough to be made the wine of hope

To warm the hearts of those we live with

Make us glad to be one of a kind,

Yet one with a kind,

Called not to be more like others,

But more of ourselves,

Guerrillas of grace,

That in daring to be authentic,

We may become more of a human-kind.

So O god of gifts,

Liberate us to share,

Without apology or arrogance,

not only the gifts we have,

But the gift we are.

Amen

Prayer IOC the Faithful

Mother Father God we bring you our prayers this evening.

Thank you for your continuing gifts of healing, comfort, and safety for all those in need.’’