

Jan Hus Presbyterian Church and Neighborhood House
351 E. 74th Stree, New York, NY 10021
212-288-6743; www.janhus.org; greetings@janhus.org

Sermon Notes:

Readings: <http://www.textweek.com/yearb/properb14.htm>

Yes. Every day.
©2102 Ray Bagnuolo

There are Sundays when the lectionary readings seem to have more of a connection than at other times. This Sunday, the readings complement one another more than most.

I've excerpted and, in some places, paraphrased a few of the passages:

Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you

So, I wait for you, YHWH—my soul waits

God will deliver Israel from all its failings.

Ephesians

Let's have no more lies, stealing; say what only will give grace to your listeners.
Try to imitate God as beloved children

John:

We are all part of the same loaf of bread. All part of the rushing waters of life.
They have been given to us by God, as witnessed and demonstrated by the special gifts God and Jesus and Spirit make available to us.

You see me and don't believe. I am here not to do my will but the will of God.

Stop your grumbling. The Good News is among you.

What strikes me this morning is that even in the times these were written, perhaps especially for the times in which they were written – people were still working on this God-stuff, meant with no disrespect.

- What was God all about?
- What did God have to do with us?
- What did God want from us?
- How would God treat us?

- What should we expect?
- How should we behave?

And what the authors from the psalmist to Paul to John said was” *“this takes work...”*

Most everything does for me—including cleaning my shower.

Not too long ago, I spent one of those days cleaning, when everything gets done. This included the tiles in the bathroom, the walls, floor, tub, and shower.

I was aching when I was done, and I decided I didn’t want to have to clean like this again. One of the decisions I made was to squeegee the glass and the tile in the shower after each time I used it. No exceptions. No excuses. Every time. And I wasn’t happy about this. I do not always like repetitive tasks; especially cleaning today what I can put off until tomorrow. But I had had enough of slime! Add the daily task of cleaning to shaving, brushing, vitamins...argh!

But I have to say, you know what? After weeks and a little work each day – it is still spotless. No soap scum, traces of mold – nothing. I don’t know if I could say that I like doing the squeegeeing each day – but it’s become a habit and goes quickly – and I do like the results so I just keep doing it putting aside my aversion to the time it takes and the excuses for not doing it.

This morning’s gospel reading and the psalm and the letter from Paul to the Ephesians are all about this daily, life-long, repetitive process of recognizing what needs to be done, doing it, and putting aside your aversions to whatever it takes to get it done.

And, this takes work. It took work for the apostles, the disciples, and everyone since. And I sometimes forget this. Maybe you do, too. It seems to have been true since the first day the human race became aware of God.

I was brought up with saints. When I was a kid, there were saints all around, for every occasion and for every day. At Catholic Online, there are listed over 5,000 saints listed. In the “A’s” alone, there are 893 names of saints. While there is no saint officially listed for today, yesterday was the feast day of Santa Chiara or Saint Claire. In the mid 1970’s. I visited the *Basilica di Santa Chiara in Assisi*, where she founded the Order of Poor Ladies, that later became known as the Order of St. Clare. Today, her perfectly preserved skeleton is entombed in the basilica. I remember stumbling upon it while wandering about the basilica.

Growing up there were all kinds of saint-stories, stories about people like St. Clare who gave over her riches to help the poor in God’s name, with steadfast devotion to Mary, Jesus, God, and Spirit – these were part of my everyday life from five to sixteen. And I still remember a good deal of this – 50 years later.

The powerful message I got, over and over, was to be like these saints – whose stories are inspiring and also romanticized in order to lift up people in the midst of troubles, frequently blending the need for the day in the recounting of the narrative – blurring the factual and historical. Much like today's bible, saints lives were never meant to be historical but to be inspirational. To touch us in a way that otherwise would be left untouched. It is part of the living, revealing, presence of God that is all around us, part of us, everywhere.

My comments are so much about saints today, but about how we can be so impressed early in our lives with devotions and stories that rightfully humble us – that aspirationally we begin to seek unrealistic expectations of who and what we are supposed to be. We become dulled by the obsession of being perfect, missing out on the mystery and wonder of being gloriously in God's care and all that means to us and the others who know us. You know, I never recall anyone in those early years saying, God will make of anyone God wishes a "saint." Those who set out to be a "saint" are most likely going to be disappointed. Don't try to be a saint, try to be who you are living as faithfully as you can. Leave the rest to God.

I could have used more messages like that – reinforced more often, because I never really did hear things the first time!

"Just believe." "Just believe and do your best to help others, and follow others who do these things. The rest will come. Be patient. Stop grumbling..."

If I was told that, I didn't hear it or understand it.

What I remember is I had to be perfect to please God, just like the saints.

Later, I discovered as we all did that the saints were as human as we, but by that time the revelation just added to the confusion and the contradiction...

confusion and contradiction that so permeates institutions...

that try to represent spiritual life in the presence of a loving God,

even those institutions which call themselves Christian...

quickly seems as though something is broken...and has been for a long time.

But I digress, once more; the point of these comments this morning and in these readings is that there is no state of perfection or perfect peace that I know of. In fact, I don't think there ever has been. It always has been an approximation. A path to such a place.

We look back at the time of the psalms, in this case **Psalm 130** and we see anything but idyllic conditions:

Out of the depths I cry to you
So, I wait for you, YHWH—my soul waits
God will deliver Israel from all its failings.

And we find people no happier about waiting than as now for peace, serenity, calm – or clean showers...

Ephesians

Let's have no more lies, stealing; say what only will give grace to your listeners.
Try to imitate God as beloved children.

(Become a saint? Well, in the early Christian church, those who followed Jesus – all who followed Jesus were called saints?)

And therein is John's message from Jesus in some ways:

Stop your grumbling. You who are saints. You who have me among you.

Stop the noise. Even you do not see what is here, what I have shown you, what you know in your hearts as well as have seen and heard with your eyes and ears.
Stop.

Listen.

Again!

I am the bread of life – we are all of the same loaf if you follow me and believe.
Stop your grumbling and follow – do the work that needs to be done, and rest knowing that your soul can wait upon God. Seek no terminus or end point – other than to do the work in my name and know you are loved by God **and** as God loves you so, too, can you love others

...what is so hard about that?

Well, gee, Jesus, you mean everyday? Yes, just like cleaning your shower, every day.

Yes. What is so hard about letting go. You think you're in charge.

You're not in charge you are "in Love."

So quit bellyaching and live and love and share in this bread of life that I bring to you, share in this cup of drink, this drink that will satisfy the deepest yearning of your hearts and souls, and know that you will always be with me and my Abba God and Spirit – we're all together. So,

Yes, do this everyday – and pray, and rest, recline in this Love and quit grumbling.

Quit stealing, lying, cheating, arguing, fighting, being envious, greedy, -- afraid.

You mean we can really live like that? Won't the world fall apart. Won't people take everything from me. I'll end up like the hole in the doughnut! (Not sure if they had doughnuts, then)

Relax. Try it. Everyday. Don't worry about mistakes or being perfect or a saint..every day. Don't worry, I am with you – with you all. You'll be fine. I promise.

Trust me, saints. For all I say is true. Come. Come to this table when we eat. And remember all I have said and all we have done. You'll feel better after we have supped together.

Yes, coming together in worship, prayer, song and a meal...

And God's great and ever-present abundant Love...

Act as if it is so...until you know it is.

Amen.