

Sermon Notes: October 6, 2019

Lectionary Readings https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearC_RCL/Pentecost/CProp22_RCL.html

Focus: Faithfulness, Mustard Seeds and little St. Francis

Marcus Borg on Faithfulness

The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith, Borg has a beautiful meditation on faithfulness and he has defined several categories of faith that I think are worth examining.

My interpretation of Borg's categories of faith

Visio is the faith of seeing. For Borg, there are three ways to see our world: *hostile, indifferent, and gracious*.

A *hostile visio* is built with self defense because something/someone is out to get us. An *indifferent visio* leads to a hideout mentality because no one is looking out for you. Borg's best option for this category (*visio* faith) is *gracious*. This makes sense to me: strive for a faith in beauty and kindness that can be seen. Look and you will find a gracious vision.

Personally, I sometimes veer to *indifferent*. Being a latch-key-only-kid of the 1970's, My "faith" was in the bumper sticker "life a b..ch, then you die." But, God has sent literally dozens of random people to prove this "faith" wrong throughout my adulthood, The whole of my life is moving to a *gracious visio*.

Fidelitas is the faith of attentiveness and loyalty to God. I think fidelitas gets a bad rap as old-time religion. Sometimes fellow parishioners look down on those who are loyal to church institution, but don't have a showy faith. Thank God for the builders and those loyal to systems as *an expression of their devotion and faithfulness*, Fidelitas is where the rubber meets the road.

Maybe you actively dislike fidelitas and want to blow it all up as outdated and outmoded. That might be **unfaithful** unless you are deeply committed to 'that thing' and rebuilding 'that thing' you want to blow up.

Fiducia is the faith of trust—a "radical trust in God." Even when surrounded by lions, fiducia gets you through it. J.K Rowling says, "Rock bottom became the solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life." Todd says, "If you are in free fall, God is at the bottom waiting for you."

Assensus is the faith of assenting to something. It gets a bad rap too as blind obedience to a creed or for being overly intellectual For Borg, assensus (at its best) means seeing *Jesus as the decisive disclosure of God and of what a life full of God looks like. It means affirming Jesus as the Word of God, the wisdom of God.* Assensus is rock solid belief without being rigid. Borg's words to further describe assensus are "deeply and loosely."

Borg writes about **deeply**: faith involves our loyalty and trust and seeing at the deepest level of the self and **loosely**: we need to avoid the human tendency toward excessive precision and certitude. Sorry if I sound like a broken record on being loose, but it bears repeating. At our highest - we're not know-it-alls, but are deeply into what we do know and loose enough not to insist on our own way. We give our hearts to God who gives us something to 'assent to' outside of ourselves, family, or world.

Traditional categories of faith Here are more traditional categories of faith

- **fides** trust, faith, confidence, belief, loyalty, assurance
- **confidentia** confidence, trust, self-confidence, certitude, audacity,
- **fiducia** confidence, trust, assurance, reliance, security
- **religio** qualms, dishonour, conscientiousness, reverence, sanctity

Jesus on faithfulness

Jesus uses the image of a mustard seed to show that faith is not a quantity. It's:

- a direction to look (visio),
- a practice of commitment (fidelitas),
- a trust that the bottom is solid (fudicia)
- a destination of our heart (assensus)

If you start with these practices - even as small as a mustard seed - it's more than enough.

Two final thoughts

Non-Borg, Geek notes on mustard *Mustard in the bible and agriculture*

- Mustard (many species) average 120 days from seed to flower.
- Depending on species they grow up to 12 ft high and nearly impossible to get rid of once established.
- Levitical Law was keen on not mixing species and foods for practical reason - mustard could be invasive and mess up certain crops

And... St. Francis his feast day is October 4 and this year it is a Friday. So we're not going to make the whole Sunday about him, but I think he's yet another way to think about faithfulness using this idea of the mustard seed. He started out really small, by getting rid of everything and starting over because he had the visio, fidelitas, fiducia, assensus to do it.

Todd