



Leaning Into the Heart of the Holy

2016 Lenten Devotions

Tuesday of Holy Week

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By Andy Barker

I often reflect on our Youth Pilgrimage to Alaska in the summer of 2014 and sincerely appreciate the continued support of our youth by our church family. The guidance and exposure to a broad spectrum of thoughts and ideas only strengthen our youth's character— especially when tested away from their parents and our church family. I have always had a particular connection and respect for Native Alaskans and Native Americans and their communion with a "Supreme Being" and nature.

As we prepare for today's prayer service on the Labyrinth, I recall two references from Native American writings about circles and faith which we used in our Pilgrimage worship services:

“And God showed me a little thing,
In the palm of my hand, round like a ball,
no bigger than a hazelnut.
I gazed at it, puzzling at what it might be.
And God said to me, ‘It is all of creation.’
I was amazed that it could last
and did not suddenly disintegrate
and fall into nothingness, for it was so tiny.

And again God spoke to me,
‘It lasts, both now and forever, because I cherish it.’
And I understood that everything has its being
owing to God's care and love.
We need to realize the insignificance of creation
and see it for the emptiness it is
before we can embrace the uncreated God in love.
We will find no rest for our heart or spirit
as long as we seek it in insignificant things
which cannot satisfy us, rather than in God
who is omnipotent, omniscient, and beneficent.
He is our true repose.

And he desires to be known
and is pleased that we should rest in him.
For nothing less than him can satisfy us.
We cannot rest until we are detached from all that is created.
When we have done so for the love of God who is all,
only then are we able to enjoy spiritual rest.”

And from the Plains Indian Chief, Black Elk:

You have noticed that everything that an Indian does is in a circle and that is because the power of the world always works in circles and everything tries to be round. In the old days when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came to us from the sacred loop of the nation and so long as the loop was unbroken, the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living center of the loop and the circle of the four quarters nourished it. The east gave peace and light, the south gave warmth, the west gave rain, the north with its cold and mighty wind gave strength and endurance. Everything the power of the world does is done in a circle. The sky is round and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball and so are the stars. The wind, with its great power, whirls. Birds make their nests in a circle. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle... Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing and always coming back again to where they were. The life of a person is a circle from childhood to childhood and so it is with everything where His power is.

Prayer:

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself; and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. –Thomas Merton, from *Thoughts in Solitude*

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

John 12:20-36

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. The crowd answered him, “We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains for ever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.”

After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.