

The Rev. Kimberly Reinholz  
Grace and Holy Trinity Church  
July 2, 2017  
Matthew 10:40-42

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The New Colossus- by Emma Lazarus:

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

The Mother of Exiles, Lady Liberty, welcomed 4 of my great grandparents into the country- Giuseppe Russo, Maria DeVito, Mary Hannah McCairns, and John Joseph Donnelly. Two of the others are a mystery as my paternal grandmother was abandoned and adopted and we don't have much of a history of that branch of the family tree. My remaining great grand parents can be traced to at least one ancestor who was granted land by Washington after the Revolution. But I want to focus for a moment on Joe, Mary, Mary and John. These four were part of the huddled masses who yearned for freedom. They were part of the great European migration in the early part of the 20th century coming from Italy, Scotland, and Ireland respectively. They each had different motives for coming to this country, they all had different stories of their lives once they arrived, but they were all welcomed into the United States.

Their welcome was not always warm. But they settled here, they raised their families and they planted roots. Roots in a nation where they didn't know the language, they didn't know the culture and didn't know what to expect from their neighbors. My grandmother Clara, told me once that her father Guiseppe, didn't speak much English so once as a child, when he had an issue with his foreman she went and talked to him about the problem as an interpreter.

When you don't know the language, when you don't know the culture, when you don't know what to expect, you can easily be taken advantage of by those who are in the know. But the promise of freedom, the promise of welcome, the promise of a nation where they could live and work and have autonomy was enough to bring my great grandparents to this country. When they got here their lives were not easy, and I cannot say if they would have been better off if they had stated "home" but I can say that I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for the courage, the fortitude and the faith that the Russos and the Donnellys had as immigrants.

This week as we prepare to celebrate independence day, I was struck by the similarities in language in Emma Lazarus' poem The New Colossus, and the Gospel for today. The notion of the radical welcome, the welcome of Jesus, the welcome of God the Father, the welcome of the prophet, the welcome of the righteous and the gift of water as refreshment for them all is reflected in Lazarus words welcome the tired, the poor, those who are suffocating under oppression let them come here. Let them come here. Let them come here.

Let all those who are in need come. Let us be bigger than the New Colossus, Let us be more gracious than that Mother of Exiles, Lady Liberty. Let us be the welcoming church that we claim to be. By our currently 21st century make up The Episcopal Church is not The National Church, despite commonly being talked about in such a way. The Episcopal Church also includes member dioceses in Colombia, Haiti, The Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, and Venezuela. The Church is bigger than any nation or any denomination. The Church is called to welcome all people into the the thirst quenching waters of Baptism, to encourage individuals into a relationship with God, a God who provides for every need. A God who embodies the radical nature of True hospitality.

Radical hospitality means welcoming not only those who talk like us, not only those who look like us, not only those who live like us, or worship

like us, or eat like us, but welcoming everyone. Today's gospel invites us to welcome not only Jesus but the one who sent Him, by welcoming those who speak the truth- the prophets. Think for a moment about the prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos, Habakkuk, Haggai, Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Malachi, Micah, Nahum, Obadiah, Zechariah, and Zephaniah. The prophets often speak truth with harsh words and images. They speak of injustice and violence and wrong doing and they are not concerned with who may be offended by their prophecy. I wouldn't necessarily want to welcome a person who compared my nation to a whore to have a cup of coffee, or ask to dinner a person who thought that the end of days was an appropriate conversation topic, or invite someone who interpreted dreams with morbid outcomes into my home. Yet Jesus tells us to welcome the prophet into our midst, and when we welcome the prophet, we welcome Him, and we welcome the one who sent Him. So we are encouraged to open our homes and pour a drink from the waters of baptism for our prophetic guests. Whoever you are, you are welcome here.

Radical hospitality also means that we welcome those who are righteous, but unlike the prophets those who are righteous tend not to stand out in scripture. The most righteous figure (arguably) in Hebrew Scripture is Job. Job who struggled through death and destruction, poverty and trials which compounded one upon the other, his faith did not waiver. Even when Satan himself tested him Job remained steadfast in faith. I wouldn't necessarily invite a failure at widow and grieving father to my child's birthday party in the midst of him filing bankruptcy, who wants to part with someone who is in mourning wearing sackcloth and ashes? Yet Jesus tells us to welcome the righteous into our midst, and when we welcome the righteous we welcome Him and we welcome the one who sent Him. So we are encouraged to open our homes and pour a drink from the waters of baptism for our righteous guests. Whoever you are, you are welcome here.

This week I had the distinct privilege of attending the Young Adult Campus Ministry conference in Austin. The preacher and key note speaker was our own Presiding Bishop The Right Rev Michael Curry. His sermon was based upon the theme of the conference Cultivate Resilient Hope.

He spoke of the prophet Jeremiah being born in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong vocation. But reminded those gathered in the name of Jesus that at anytime anyone of us could be in the wrong place or time or calling but what will keep us grounded, what keeps us hopeful, what keeps us listening to our call is our roots. His refrain throughout his time with us was that "the key to the fruit is in the root".

Based in the prophecy of Jeremiah, the gospel and reinforced by the spiritual “We shall not be moved” Bishop Curry reminded those of us who work with young adults to be steady and stalwart in our faith, like trees planted by the water that shall not be moved.

This is how we practice radical hospitality and welcome in our parishes; in our diocese; in our denomination; and in the Church at large; with the strength of a well watered tree. This is how we live into our faith as Christians with deep roots. The roots of immigrants and colonists; the roots of those whose histories are known and those whose histories are lost; the roots of which we are proud and the roots of which we are ashamed. They are all here. All of these lives are intertwined and in this great intricate root system all of these stories overlap and make our Church what it is today.

Without all of these twisted and enmeshed roots we would be weaker, without all of these experiences we wouldn't be who we are today. Our family tree as Christians can trace our roots deep, deep, and deeper back into the chronicles of time. We follow the footsteps of sinners and saints of kings and paupers. We are descended from Abraham and Sarah. We are descended from Noah and Naamah. We are descended from Adam and Eve. These ancestors of ours were righteous and prophetic and they were welcome into God's family. They were welcome to return again to the Lord. They were invited to covenantal relationships with God. They are invited to drink from the well of life, just as we are.

We are invited to come to the kingdom of Christ. We are invited to come close and drink from the well which will never run dry. We are invited to come close and know the truth proclaimed by prophecy. We are invited to come close and never again thirst for righteousness. We are invited to come close and know Jesus and God and the Holy Spirit as only those who accept and love the Trinity can.

Jesus says come. Jesus says let us come and let them drink, we are them and they are us. Jesus sets the example for all of his disciples to follow.

For Christian's our roots are not only in the soil of the places where our ancestors lived and toiled but in the very soil that God created. The deep dark soil watered by the eternal spring is where all generations take root from great grandparents to grandparents and parents to children and grandchildren and great grand children world without end in the Church.

We are welcome and we are invited to welcome, everyone.

Not like the new Colossus, we are a instead a new evangelist:

A New Evangelist- Kimberly Reinholz

Not like the brazen giant Lady Liberty,  
With shining light risen above her head;  
Here at our sun drenched red doors we stand  
All men and women with water, whose liquid  
Is eternal and God given and in His name we are made  
Children of God. From our dark-soiled roots  
Entwined throughout the world-we bid welcome  
To the kingdom of God and the family of Christ  
"Keep ancient lands, and nations new born!" we cry.  
With open mouths we shout. "Give me your righteous,  
Your prophets yearning to breathe free,  
The thirsty who seek justice and mercy.  
Send these, the homeless, the hungry, the oppressed,  
We open wide your Kingdom Lord!"

Amen