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Grace and Holy Trinity Church
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Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16/ Luke 12:32-40

I spy with my little eye something that is ... Gold.

In the past few months, The Reinholzs have spent many hours in the car playing this game. The summer has been punctuated with trips to the Smoky Mountains and the Delaware Seashore and this simple game may be the only thing that both my children can play.

As a result of “I Spy” perspective and how different people see different things from different angles has been discussed at length. It’s been a fun summer, trying to see what the kids see, because a lot of the time we don’t see from one another’s point of view at all.

When thinking about the readings for today I started really pondering the things which we are looking for, the things that we see and the things that we don’t see in our daily life and work. I engaged with the Gospel and imagined myself keeping watch at night—looking out over the ramparts of an ancient city, trying to stay awake and be prepared for the Master to return, but being distracted by the shadows of the night—the wolves and the sheep, the shepherds and the nomadic people who live outside the walls. Wondering, while watching and waiting. What they are doing out there, what are they talking about, what are they planning, do they want to come in? Are they a real threat or an imagined one?

When I cast myself in that role I understand what Jesus is saying in a different way. I can see how the things which distract from the task at hand are sometimes imagined threats, but the fear I feel is no less real for a true threat or an imagined one. So when Jesus tells his disciples to not be afraid, but be prepared because the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour. He means to have faith in God, to hold on to the promises which God has made to The People.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews the author defines Faith as the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things unseen. Which lead me to ponder

What do we believe in?
What do we wait for?
hope for?
strive for?

What I concluded is something that I hope you all find familiar and that you agree with because in a few minutes we will affirm this belief as the community, the body of Christ the Church.

We believe in one God... the maker of heaven and earth of all this is seen and unseen.

I had a spiritual director who was brilliant at saying, “Where is God in this?” And I’d stare at her blankly sometimes and say I don’t know. She’d send me out to look for God in the maelstroms of my life. For a long time, I looked for God, like Mr. Rogers told us to Look for the Helpers. In crisis, God is there in the hands that bind wounds, in the mouths that sing lamentations, in the images that bring us hope.

But God isn't only there when helpers are seen. God isn't only there when good things happen. Nor is God only there in the midst of pain. God is omnipresent, the creator of all things, known and unknown, things that were and are and will be.

Christ is in all and with all as we were reminded last week. The Holy Spirit is with us at all times and in all places.

I am not discounting Teresa of Avila's teaching that God has no hands but ours, no feet but ours, no mouth but ours in the world. I actually very much believe that we are the Body of Christ in the world. But I don't think that we are seen as Christ-like very often. Nor do I think we live into that identity most of the time if we really want to be honest with ourselves. I want to, I want to be the body of Christ, until it becomes something that requires me to act differently than I currently am.

I want to be comfortable. I want to be cared for. I want my children to be comfortable and cared for. I want my parents to be comfortable and cared for and my siblings and my in-laws and my nieces and nephews and my friends ... I want all those people I care about to be comfortable. I want them to be sleeping healthy and peacefully in their beds when I am standing watch and waiting for the Master to arrive.

But that is not what Jesus wants for us. What Jesus wants, for all of us, to be watchful, not to be anxious, but to be prepared for the things that are seen and unseen. For us to be prepared for us to receive the things that the all powerful, all loving, all knowing, all being God has prepared for us. We need to believe in and hope for things seen and unseen.

Our hope in the unimaginable is inherited from Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, by Jacob and Rachel and Leah all of whom believed in God's promise and lived into it without knowing where or when or how the promise would be fulfilled.

I doubt very highly that these Jewish nomadic people would have imagined me as their ancestor when imagining heirs numbering greater than the stars, or the grains of sand on a beach.

Likewise let us be assured that when the future is imagined, the reality of that future will undoubtedly be different than anything that is known now.

Some of the things that we ought to be watching for and be prepared to receive as gifts from God but that we have not yet seen, are things which are truly divine. Things like absolute Justice, and Mercy and Peace on the Earth. So let's play our own version of I Spy:

I spy with my mind's eye a system that is just.

I dream of a creation that has been promised by God. The notion of Justice is foundational to our faith. There is the justice of Egypt and the justice of Rome and the justice of the judges and the kings, and the scribes and the Pharisees, but the Justice of Jesus Christ is epitomized for me in his speaking from the cross to the condemned man- today you will be with me in

paradise. This welcome is an expression of things hoped for and yet unseen. We too hope for the welcome into the kingdom, but we do not know when the promise will be fulfilled.

God's justice is different than human justice, God's justice is universal, there is no prejudice, there is no sexism, or racism, or xenophobia or homophobia in God's love and compassionate justice. All are given what they need freely if only they ask.

I spy with my mind's eye a system that is merciful.

In the world promised by God, there is mercy and forgiveness for all our sins. Sin being anything that separates us from the love of God or the love of our neighbor. So consider where mercy is needed, where forgiveness is needed, not where it is deserved. Mercy is not clemency, mercy is divinely inspired letting go of judgment and resentment and allowing God's love to redefine relationships.

God's mercy is different than human mercy. God's mercy is universal, there is no prejudice, there is no sexism, or racism or xenophobia or homophobia in God's love and compassionate mercy. All are given what they need freely if only they ask.

I spy with my mind's eye a system that is peaceful.

In God's perfect creation, there is peace and unity. Swords are beaten into plowshares and lions lie down with lambs. Children play with the asp and we all live in safety. Our world is far from peaceful. Our world is torn apart by war and discrimination. Our world is full of violence towards others and violence towards ourselves. There is no peace, because people seem not to know peace.

God's peace is different than human peace. God's peace is universal, there is no prejudice, there is no sexism, or racism or xenophobia or homophobia in God's love and compassionate peace. All are given what they need freely if only they ask.

How do Christians as heirs of Christ who was a descendant of Abraham, understand all of this? Christians understand all of this to be an extension of the promises that Christ made to his disciples, without whom we would not be followers of Jesus.

Christians understand believing in things unseen, because from the beginning Christians knew that God would do more than they could ask or imagine

and that through the continued hope,
the continued preparedness,
the continued watching and waiting and praying and discerning of faithful people
that their small flock,
their little frightened band of followers of Rabbi ben Joseph would not be left without hope.

By their hope, we have come to be.
By our hope, greater things will yet come to pass.

But our hope is not without action, our hope includes striving towards a world where God's mercy, justice, and peace reign supreme. A world where all are welcome and where everyone is equally given what they need freely, and all they need to do is ask.

These are things that Baptized Christians in the Episcopal Church promise to pursue although for many of us they remain unseen.

We strive seek and serve Christ in all persons, pursuing Justice, Freedom and Peace.

In this community in a microscopic way as we begin to wait and watch and pray for our next rector. We have the opportunity to hope for things not yet seen, and know that there are ministries and missions of this parish which never were imaginable 10, 20, 50 years ago. Look at Red Door Ministry, formerly the Soup Kitchen. When Merrily McNamara and the other women of the congregation started feeding people from the park soup every Friday (except in August) they would have never imagined it would become a ministry which cares not just for empty bellies, but for an entire person, body, soul, mind and spirit. Through Red Door Ministry more than 100 people a week on average are fed, provided a place to pray, a place to rest, and a place where they are welcomed with open arms. If not for the hope of those women of GHTC this ministry would not be what it is today.

This is just one small example of how the Holy Spirit transforms our human acts into divine acts. We ought not be afraid to hope, we ought to be aware that God is already at work on things that we haven't yet imagined, never the less we need to begin to look for hopeful opportunities in the life of this parish, this city, this nation and the world. The Church holds onto and affirms belief in things seen and unseen, known and unknown, done and left undone.

We have found ourselves waiting for God's will to be done, we watch and wait patiently for the Master to arrive. But in the meantime we need to acknowledge that we are not powerless, but instead we are given an unimaginable gift. So we keep showing up and ask God to bring about Justice, Freedom and Peace in our lives because God is our hope, and in our hope we begin to see what previously was unseen.

I spy with my little eye something I've never seen before...

It doesn't scare me but fills me with hope.

Let us watch together, and wait for, and pursue, those things which we know God has promised. While we watch we will continue in our own human ways to find glimmers of Justice, Mercy, and Peace for all people, not just our people.

Amen