

Gen 18:1-15, 21:1-7; Psalm 116:1, 10-17; Rom 5:1-8; Matt 9:35-10:23

Second Sunday after Pentecost – Year A – June 18, 2017

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Our lessons this morning call to mind that life is a journey. We all know that fact, and we're on it together for a time. Abraham and Sarah had been called by God to leave their home and go into a land unknown. In today's portion of their journey their three visitors bring the message that Sarah in her old age will bear and son. She laughs with the notion of that message, and yet Isaac was conceived and born. The journey of parenthood begins for them as they travel in a land unknown.

Psalm 100 invites us to go into God's gates rejoicing with thanksgiving and praise. There are times in our lives when we can do this with vigor and joy beyond understanding. Come into God's presence with singing. The gift of music is healing in ways we often can't explain or fathom. And when we hear the news of tragedy striking London again with fire taking the lives of innocent poor and a shooting at a baseball practice in Alexandria, we might wonder how can we journey through these events rejoicing with thanksgiving and praise.

Paul reminds us of the journey our faith takes us in the face of suffering. "...suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." (Romans

5:3-5). Years ago a friend of mine was on a journey of dying, and this passage gave her hope throughout every step along the way in her illness. The words were a lifeline for her and gave her the courage she needed for that final journey.

Jesus went about all the cities and villages teaching and proclaiming and healing. He called the disciples together and gave them all that they needed to do what he was doing—to do it simply without baggage. They were sent out into an unknown land on their journey and given instructions and authority to do their work. You and I are sent out these many years later and reminded that we have all that we need for our journey.

This week Alex and I had the great joy of going to Yale Divinity School's Institute of Sacred Music for a workshop entitled "When Dancing Turns into Mourning." There were musicians and clergy from all around the country, and facilitators that touched my heart over and over. One was a young musician named Tony Alonso who told us a story about a man named Henry, who was deep in the throws of Alzheimer's disease.

Henry has lived in a nursing home for 10 years. He had suffered seizures, and his wife could not care for him at home. Henry normally sits in a wheelchair with his head down, mostly unresponsive and in deep depression. Dan Cohen is a social worker in New York City and has been doing research on the power of music with Alzheimer's patients. Henry loved music all of his life and used to break out into song as he walked his children to school. Now it's difficult to get

any sounds out of Henry. He was only able to answer yes or no questions, and sometimes that didn't work.

A nurse found out about Henry's love of music and with the social worker put earphones on Henry and played songs he loved on an iPad. Henry's eyes opened wide, his feet began to move and his arms swayed and he became alive with the music. For a time Henry was restored to himself. Even after the earphones were taken off, Henry was able to answer questions and be in conversation about music. "Do you like music?" he was asked. "I'm crazy about music," he said with animation. Who's your favorite singer? "Cab Callaway," Henry responds. What's your favorite song? Henry breaks into singing "I'll be Home for Christmas." In conversation he went on to say this about music: "The world needs to come into music... I feel a Band of Love... the Lord came to me and made me holy, so he gave me these sounds." Henry's story is in a documentary called *Alive Inside* and reveals the amazing power of music that transcends medicine and memory.¹

Henry's journey has taken him into an unknown land and at some level he still knows the God of his life. Henry is alive inside through the gift of music.

Music touches the soul like nothing else. Tony Alonso is also a hymn writer as were many of the conference facilitators. I learned more about the history of old hymns and new ones—the important ways that music helps and calls us to remember. Tony shared one that he had written after 9/11 and had us sing it. I want

¹ Alive Inside clip of Henry, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hlm0Qd4mP-I>.

us to read/sing it this morning. It was written in the context of tragedy and yet invites us to rejoice in the power of God who sustains us in the middle of whatever we face and especially reminds us of the strength we get at this Table. In the Prayers of the People you'll hear that we lost a Trinity family member yesterday. Jane Reeve died yesterday morning. She was undergoing emergency cardiac surgery and didn't make it through the surgery. For those who know and love Jane, you know how she saw Christ in all creation. Her journey was with us for a while. We lift our voices knowing the fragility of human life and the preciousness of it. We thank our God for all that life unfolds—the God who gives us all that we have and all that we need on our journey.