

The Rev. Wayne Nicholson
St. John's Episcopal Church
22nd July 2018
Pentecost IX (Proper 11 B, Mark 6:30-34, 53-56)

“Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.”

Ah, that life would be so simple, so idyllic – “He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.” Oh – sorry, that must be my phone ringing again. Maybe it’s the latest tweet from the White House. Nope. Weather update.

Where was I?

Oh, yes, “He revives my soul.” Dang – no, there’s a text from my sister. Doesn’t she know I’m in the pulpit? Or at least nearby?

Ah, yes... the stillness of a meadow near a quiet lake, reviving my soul. Such refreshment. If only I could stop fretting about children at our border. If only I could stop whining about healthcare inequality. If only I could... change the world.

Back to the meadow. The quiet lake. Ah... “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

There. That’s better. I may snooze for a few minutes now. You may do the same.

(Silence.)

Oh, no! There’s another wildfire in California and there’s a ginormous glacier in the harbor of a little town in Greenland and if it calves it will cause a tsunami, wiping out the village! And a candidate for governor of Pennsylvania told an eighteen year old she was young and naïve to ask a question about climate change!

No! Another tweet!

No! A Latino veteran attempted to return an item to a Home Depot in Texas and the clerk asked him for his Mexico ID. Oh. That was in June. Well, stuff like this happens every day when people attempt to drive a car, take a nap, buy something at Seven-Eleven while black.

Ah, serenity, where art thou? What do I need to accept that I cannot change? What courage do I need to change the things I can – and what *are* those “things”?

I may need a break. It’s getting harder to tell the difference.

And trying to change the world is so darn hard!

But if we refuse to accept the status quo we must try! We must, we *must* change one little tiny thing at a time – and by doing that we are changing the world.

Examples.

Sally Goodrow receives a phone call. A single mom needs help paying an overdue propane bill – her story makes sense, the Sally pledges to pay the bill. The house stays warm, the mom has enough money for groceries for her children and enough energy to go to her part-time job and her world, today, looks a little better than it did yesterday.

One of our former homeless guests comes to my office. He's been offered a truck driving job, but the employer requires that he wear boots – which he cannot afford. Because he's been unemployed. So we go to WalMart (I do hate that store) and find the boots, he reports for work, and this month he has paid his bills and bought groceries for his family. All because of a *Thirty Dollar pair of boots!* His world is transformed – he's no longer jobless nor hopeless, he sees *light*, not darkness.

I'm having a conversation with a transgender man. He has been told by his pastor that his gender issues are sinful. That he must change *who he is*. The pastor offers thoughts and prayers. (Where have we heard *that* before?!?) I say to the man, "God loves you. Just as you are." His eyes glisten with tears. Nobody, certainly no clergyperson, has ever said that to him. His world is now a *hopeful* world – just because he heard that he was loved. That, dear people, was God's doing, not mine.

Three little stories, three little examples that changed the world. A propane bill, a Thirty Dollar pair of boots, simple words from the heart of Jesus, and the world was changed.

I can't change the world by myself, and neither can you. But we *can* change little corners of the world.

And then we need some rest.

We need time to reconnect with the God of such generous love so that our spiritual, emotional, and physical energy will be refreshed and restored – *so that we can keep on changing the world.*

I can't rest if I don't put my phone aside and get off FaceBook and get my nose out of the New York Times and the Washington Post and the New Yorker because those all get me *all riled up* again and sleep is troubled. It is only when I am refreshed by the Spirit that I can change the world.

Hazel and Ezra. Today you are diving into very deep water. You are saying to God and to this community and your family and your friends that you are saying "Yes" to God. I pray that your lives will be lives of compassion and love – that you will do whatever work God asks of you and that you will return home at the end of day to rest.

You know how cranky you get if you don't take a nap? Or if Ari doesn't take a nap? Or if your mom is tired? I am a firm believer in the value of *siesta*. I'm a lot less cranky if I get good sleep. And I'm a lot less cranky if I also take a few minutes to pray. I need that sleep and those prayers if I'm going to change the world!

And even in my retirement – I'll do what I can to change the world. One little corner at a time.

Because isn't that the radical message of Jesus? You know, "Love God, love your neighbor?"

That radical commandment is *life* changing. *World* changing.

We need to do more of it. Every day.

O, my people, my lovely, loving people, I will miss you. But for these last twelve years you have given me hope in our broken world. You have spoken out against racism and homophobia and Ulana has helped challenge and guide. You've embraced two Roman Catholic nuns and turned them into Episcopalians. You have offered hospitality to Greek Orthodox and Quakers and queer college students and strangers. You have actually sung "All are welcome" and meant it even though there's always more work to be done. We have baptized and married and said farewell to so many people who are still with us in spirit. Betty. Paula. John. Tom. Alice. Bob. Tim. Jo. Connie. Dave. Helen. Jean. Karen. Marvin. Mary Ellen. Nina. Sam. Shirley. Victor. Ziggy. Carolynn.

You have created a space that says, "Welcome." You have supported the Goodrow Fund with your time and a *whole lot* of loose change and you have *changed the world*.

And I firmly believe that this parish will *continue* to change the world. Because that's who you say you are – world changers, rooted in worship and communion, inspired by the Holy Spirit, embraced by God.

I need to stop whining, stop grumbling, stop complaining and keep my feet on the ground and Jesus in my heart.

C'mon, people.

Let's change the world!

And then we can take a nap.

And then we'll get out there and change it some more!

Amen.