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Pentecost 6, Year A  
Grace, River Forest  
7/9/2023

*Falling Into Freedom*

I've seen *The Social Dilemma*. A 2020 docudrama which “explores the dangerous human impact of social networking, with tech experts sounding the alarm on their own creations.”

I know that “big tech” has done more harm than good. That social media companies exploit divisions and loneliness, foment fear, scapegoating, and alienation. They have led to families breaking apart, relationships severed, and helped folks organize an insurrection. They make it easy to demonize behind a screen with no accountability. I know that people who work for these companies often do not let their children access them because of how harmful they are to human development. But, I don't want to delete my facebook, instagram, and twitter profiles. I'm not ready to do that. Even though I know it would be in line with my values of community, democracy, nuance, and more.

It reminds me of what another pastor confessed during a sermon I'll never forget. “I love Jesus and I long for the reign of God, but I don't want to give up my amazon prime account.”

Maybe it goes like this: You know you should spend more time with your family and money isn't everything. You have regrets. But you are not ready to spend less time working or traveling for business. Maybe in a couple years.

I could keep confessing my sins. The ways I do not measure up to my own standard let alone the life I am called to in baptism. You could too.

St. Paul gives us a glimpse into his internal dilemma. “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.”

Relatable.

There is a book titled *Low Anthropology*, the unlikely key to a gracious view of others and yourself. The authors argue that a more honest, less inflated view of ourselves and others can lead to more compassion, empathy, and love.

One of the gifts of the Lutheran tradition is that we do have a “low anthropology.” We don't have a very high view of humanity. We are all sinners. Each of us curved in on ourselves. We live in

tension like Paul. We cannot save ourselves and there is no system or structure that is not shaped by sin. We will never find salvation or forgiveness somewhere deep inside if we just keep searching. We need a crucifying and resurrecting word from outside of ourselves.

The temptation is to think that we are the only ones that struggle. That no one else needs help or saving. We believe the lie that others have it all together and live aligned with their values. We imagine that it is only our internal monologue that tells us we will never measure up. Or we believe that we do not need saving at all. They do. Not so. In this gathered assembly, with St. Paul's words echoing in our hearts, we are witnesses to each other of this truth that makes us free. Around the cross, font, table and word we need not hide any longer from ourselves or each other. Are we not, as others have said, "a community of the wounded?" Isn't that good news?

We place heavy burdens on ourselves and the world does the same. Our souls are worn out. We feel the weight of our own curved-inwardness, failures, and struggles. Or the lie that we are all good. The judgements we place on others and ourselves are like yokes of shame we can never escape.

Jesus sees and knows you. Hear his voice "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Christ is already your home. All that you are is bound up in him. He is your lodging and your future. The invitation is to dwell where you reside forever. Resting in the crucified and risen one is revolutionary. No more proving ourselves, pretending before others, masking our faults, or climbing unsuccessfully up the spiritual ladder. Just fall into Christ. Let his limbs that stretch out from death to life catch you and hold you. You whose limbs are so exhausted. You are forgiven. You are a beloved child of God. You did not earn it and you will never lose it. The triune God will never forget you. Christ calls you friend and eats with you today.

In that embrace we can stretch out beyond ourselves and even catch others in our arms. As Ole Schenk reminds us in an article from *Currents in Theology and Mission* This rest is generative. It is not static. It gives power. Energy. Life. There is something about it that moves us. Christ, in whom we live, is God *on the move*. Still traveling to all those people and places lost and forgotten. Moving towards all of those realities that seem to have determined our collective futures with nothing for us to do about it. Where the world has already announced death and closed the door. There Christ brings resurrection and new life still.

When we find our rest in him and not in our work we have room to dream and imagine together what we could spend our energy on since Christ has conquered death. What is possible? What questions are you free to ask now that the grave has been emptied of all its power?

Brennan Manning said we are all bundles of paradoxes and contradictions. Let's name it. What do we do about it? Our dilemmas? Find community. Be vulnerable. Feel free to not get it right all the time. Love before you have it all figured out. Fail. Share your rough edges and regrets with others. Take a risk. Don't look inward. Look out and find Christ in your neighbors. Give up your self obsession. There is nothing left to be afraid of. Drop your disguises and stumble forward hand in hand with Christ. You have died and now you live. Lasting life is yours. You belong there.