

Pastoral Message: April 3, 2022

There are some Theologians, those who study deeply and teach the faith, that believe the mystery of God's love directs things from the future. As the book of Revelation points out, God is Alpha (beginning) and Omega (end). This mystery would mean God directs things from the end point. God is pulling us into God's future. If we look at the readings from this perspective and also at our synodal journey, it means we are on a journey to what God's future is for our church and world. Today in Isaiah, we hear that with the great things God had done in the past—leading Israel out of Slavery—now God is doing something new. The people were in exile, and God would direct them, in a sense on a synodal journey, because they would be walking, together, home. We hear the image in the Psalm of planting seeds. This is symbolic, as we get to springtime, of hope and growth, of a new beginning. In our Bible study, someone pointed out that when our African brothers and sisters were tragically captured by slave owners some of them would carry seeds with them of their homeland. When I heard this, I thought what a great act of rebellion—to not let their capturers take their ultimate hope. As we look at tragedies and injustices throughout the world, do we carry the seeds of hope? I cannot help but think of Ukraine and how that ultimate hope of gaining their freedom must help carry them forward in such tragedy, despair, and injustice. Paul gives us this image in Philippians of being on a journey or a race, and, yet, it is as if Christ has taken hold and is pulling us into God's future. If we look at this Gospel of John and the story of the woman caught in adultery, we see in this story a very violent situation with the abuse of religion and also sexism. This has been a sad part of our human history. And, as this woman was dragged out in such a violent way, we must ask, where is the man? We also see the abuse of religion when a tradition that is good is distorted in such a way as to abuse others in violent ways. This has been a part of our church as well. Perhaps Jesus in the story is directing us out of this ugly past and into God's future. This happens with the dropping of self-righteous stones but also with his release of this woman from condemnation and into a new beginning. Not just good theology but also good psychology teaches that one must come to self-acceptance and forgiveness to move forward on the journey. I believe that happened to this woman on that day because of her relationship with Jesus. Perhaps part of our synodal journey is dropping our stones and coming to forgiveness and self-acceptance so that we can walk into God's future with less baggage for the journey.