

Children's Sermon (for God)

(It was) said that Cheryl lived in her own little world. That wasn't meant to be mean or as ridicule, it simply reflected that Cheryl lived a limited breadth of life. She (worked) in a large office, but sat in a cubicle eight hours a day. She was excellent in her work, and her supervisors were so very pleased with the work she turned in. Her numbers were amazing, and her errors were few.

At the end of each day, Cheryl cleared her desk, left the building, and drove (to her) modest home. Cheryl enjoyed her very quiet life. She never married. She rarely watched TV, and rarely ventured onto the internet, she rarely spoke on the phone. While her life may seem terribly small for many of you, for Cheryl her world fit her quite well. In fact, many people have (encouraged) Cheryl to "get out some" and "broaden your horizons" for years, but she is content to live in her own little world.

I wonder how many of us have a little bit of Cheryl in us? (Life is) complicated, and relationships are hard so wouldn't we be better off living in our own little world, a world where we deem what is true or false, right or wrong, and where love is a protected emotion for the simple reason that loving someone else makes us so very vulnerable.

Cheryl lives a safe life, in her own little world, happy with whatever she chooses to eat, read, or wear. How does that sound to you?

In both of the readings for this 2nd Sunday in Lent, it is very clear that God encourages, no demands, (that we) not shut ourselves in our own safe little worlds, but that we be willing to trust the guiding and presence of God to lead us as a shepherd leads the flock. Cheryl would be one of those really reluctant sheep that simply will not go.

The story of Abram and Sarai is the archetype of the "faithful journey." While the writer of Genesis presents (a multi)-faceted plan for them, the key words to the reading are these: "and he went."

What do you think were the questions from the family? Where are you going? Why are you going? Will you be back? The writer implies a strong sense of confidence in the voice. Would you go? (Cheryl) felt faint every time she heard these words: and he went.

Of course, God was (opening) Abram's world-view...but more Abram was a man of faith and trust. His confidence in God's presence was nothing short of amazing. And yet, we live each day in that very presence of God. And we are called to a no less amazing journey, not to a new land, but to a new way of living (where) justice is meted equally for all people. Where peace is the united desire of leaders and nations. Where enough is available to feed every child, and offer every benefit for freedom.

(Abraham) and Sarah were the good people God chose to show the world how faith and righteousness can impact our life together. After the big fail at the Garden of Eden, these two would carry on...giving birth to (three) world-faith expressions, well into their 90's. Abraham you need to trust me. Lord, I do trust you. Cheryl, you need to trust me. ("Lord), I, um...well, I'll just stay here and you can tell me about it."

There is a sure and certain (safety) in remaining comfortably in one's own little, peaceful world.

In a lot of ways, Nicodemus was more like Cheryl than he was like Abraham. (Nick) was a Pharisee, and their little world was bordered by the law of Moses, all 622 rules and ways. Nick's world was truly that of "Law and Order." And in their minds, that was the extent of God's reign over the world....their little world....622 laws.

But....then (there) were the signs. Jesus had touched untouchable people, and had given them new life. Jesus told (stories) of grace and mercy where love was more powerful than punishment. Jesus

had given Temple-rights back to those who had been denied the right to enter because of their sin. Jesus continually (stepped) back from the circle of believers to make room for those out there. Jesus did all of that, (and) Nick wanted to know why.

At night, Cheryl locked her doors. While there were only three doors, each (had four) locks. The 12 locks provided security. The 12 locks provided barriers to keep her safe. The 12 locks secured her world. And Cheryl was happy. And Cheryl was safe in the dark.

(Nick) came to Jesus at night, or in the dark. It was more a reality of Nick's ignorance than it was the darkness of the power of evil. Nick didn't know. He thought he did....but, he didn't. And so Jesus offered him a touch-stone. Nick, you need a new start. You need a vacation. Nick, you need a better view....you need new-birth....a reboot....

Whether Jesus literally (meant) Nick needed to be "born-again" or to be "born-from-above" his encouragement was Nick needed new understanding.

And I think that is the Lenten path that we are on. We are invited (to see) things differently. We are invited to broaden our understanding of God's grace and ways. And so, is Cheryl!

(It is) said Cheryl lives in her own little world. And so do many of us. Yet, I ask that you hear this with a willing heart:

(John) 3:16 is perhaps the world's best known Bible verse. It says that God so loved the world....

Cheryl (hears) that as "her world" small, compact, safe. The Pharisees would hear that as their "law-limited world" as orderly and affording them authority over others....which is also small, compact and safe for them.

But, the (word) "world" used is "kosmos" what we would understand as the universe. God loves the universe and Jesus saves the universe...the far reaches of Hubble's cameras; the sanctity of life of every person who has ever lived....a love so amazing that it cannot be kept locked out by 12 locks....or fully experienced without the risk of love. (Cheryl,) Nicodemus, Abram & Sarai have been invited....and so are you. You up for it?

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