

March 21, 2021
Fifth of Lent

Meditation: “Godstalking”

This Lent the Old Testament readings have been about covenants. In the first three weeks of Lent alone we’ve read about God’s covenant with Noah, God’s covenant with Abraham, and our side of the covenant – the ten commandments. Thinking about all of this, thinking about God’s fervent desire for a relationship with us, whether we really want one or not, made me think that it’s a good thing that there is no cosmic court, with a peer that could sit and pass judgement on God, for doubtless God would be found guilty of stalking; stalking humankind.

God yearns so much for a relationship with us that God will stop at nothing. God started it all by creating us to be in relationship with. God first made a covenant with Noah, promising to be our God, and to make us God’s people. You know the story. You’ve read the Old Testament. You know that we turned from God. But God would not settle for that. God yearned for a relationship with us and was determined to have us as God’s own. So, God made a covenant with Abraham, promising to be our God, and to make us God’s people. You know the story. You’ve read the Old Testament. You know that we turned from God. But God would not settle for that. God yearned for a relationship with us and was determined to have us as God’s own. So, God made a covenant with Moses and the people of Israel, promising to be our God, and to make us God’s people. You know the story. You’ve read the Old Testament. You know that we turned from God. But God would not settle for that. God yearned for a relationship with us and was determined to have us as God’s own. So, God sent the prophets to remind us of the covenantal promises between us and God, that God would be our God and we would be God’s people. You know the story. You’ve read the Old Testament. You know that we turned from God. But God would not settle for that. God yearned for a relationship with us and was determined to have us as God’s own. So, God sent God’s beloved son, Jesus, to restore the covenant with the people of Israel, promising to be our God, and to make us God’s people. There is no end to God’s yearning to be in relationship with us. There is nothing that could ever possibly prevent God from wanting and working to be our God and to make us God’s own; not even the threat of death on a cross is enough to stop God’s love for us. Such is God’s desire for us. It’s obvious, right? God is stalking us! Look at God stalking.

Or is that God’s talking? Listen, God’s talking. But how does God talk? God spoke to directly to Noah. God spoke to Abram through three angels, literally messengers of God. God spoke to Moses in that still small voice. God spoke to the Israelites through the prophets. Many people now believe that prophets foretell the future. But the prophets of the Bible did not so much foretell the future, but forth told their present reality. They revealed what was rotten in the system of their day. The prophets, and many consider

Jesus, amongst other things, to be a prophet, spoke out about social injustices – the plight of the radically poor: the orphan, the widow; the plight of the socially ostracized: the leper, the demon possessed; the plight of the outsider: the resident alien who lived in their midst.

We have prophets today too. In fact, I've heard the stories of three different groups of prophets this week alone. BLM, AAPI, and MMIW. What is interesting is that all three groups are speaking about the same injustice – Systemic Racism.

The trial of Derek Chauvin is shining a spotlight on the systemic injustices that black Americans face on a daily basis. And before you say, thank God we are Canadian I want to remind you that we too live in America... North America, and we too have a problem with systemic racism against black Canadians. Don't believe me? Can you drive home after dark without fear of being pulled over by police because of the colour of your skin? Can you walk into a store without being followed and having your every move watched? These things, and much more, happen routinely to black Canadians.

Then there was the story about the shooting in Atlanta. It put a focus on the frightening treatment of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and their descendants, in North America. The shooting was only one incident, but there are others. Incidents of elderly people of Asian heritage being pushed, knocked to the ground, sworn at, spat upon, in the US of A, and in Canada. Some blame the rhetoric of the former president who called the pandemic the Chinese flu or the Kung flu. It may not be the only reason for the rise of incidents involving Asian people, but it certainly didn't help matters either. This is a story that goes back, in Canada, to the building of the transcontinental railroad using Chinese labour.

Then on the news last night there were two stories. One was about the treatment the family of Colten Boushie received at the hands of the RCMP. The RCMP approached his mother's home with weapons drawn; searched the house, without a warrant; asked her if she had been drinking – even smelling her breath. There was also a story about missing and murdered indigenous women, and the way families are treated when they report a missing family member. Reports are dismissed. Follow up is, at best half-hearted, or non-existent. These cases aren't just about racist attitudes in the police departments, but about racist attitudes across white society.

And I won't even go into the stories about sexism in the Canadian Military.

The people speaking out about systemic racism in North America are prophets. They are prophets of God. They are speaking to white North Americans. They are forth telling, revealing, what is rotten in our society. They are speaking God's words of condemnation. The question is, when God's talking, are we listening?

Covenants are about relationships. Relationships are about commitment, and commitment is about deep, abiding love. Covenants also create identity. When something is written on stone tablets, it can be stored away in a chest. When something is written on paper, it can be put on the bookshelf to collect dust. When something is written on our hearts, it becomes part of who we are – it is of vital importance to us – it forms our identity and changes us forever. When God's dreams and desires are written on our hearts, God's dreams and desires become our dreams and desires. That is what God is talking about here. It's that our relationship becomes more than just a Sunday morning thing - it becomes who we are and what our life's purpose is. The thing that is in our heart is the thing that we spend our lives pursuing.

Yes, God is talking. And, God is stalking. God is still standing in the wings: waiting for us to hear the messages of social injustice; waiting for us to act on the social injustices; waiting for us to become God's people. God has never stopped being our God, even when we stop being God's people. Thanks be to God.