

“Invitation to Exegetical Conversation” by Fred Taylor

June 23, 2013

The 5th Sunday after Pentecost

Fred Taylor, along with Sonya Dyer, called Seekers Church into being in 1976. Fred now worships with Eighth Day Church, another of the Church of the Saviour offspring. Today, he invited us into what he called an “exegetical conversation” about the future of Seekers and the entire Church of the Saviour community.

Fred began by referencing [Marjory’s sermon at Eighth Day Church](#) last week. Then, he spoke of how the Eighth Day congregation had changed the language of its commitment statement from the original, “I unreservedly and with abandon commit my life and destiny to Christ” to something that seemed more up-to-date, but to his ears airbrushes out the mystery. Speaking of the “explosive power of a new affection,” he said that for him, the older language does not so much describe him, but rather what he sees of himself when the love of God takes him over. In reading the New Testament, he continued,

What got hijacked by both fundamentalists and liberals is the identity of Jesus and his message. The Kingdom of God breaking in is the Good News. The New Testament is essentially the story of the Kingdom of God breaking in. We miss this powerful connection and understanding of who Jesus is and allow the notion of “God” to go off into space. The New Testament stories illustrate what it looks like when the Kingdom of God breaks in.

There are two important clues to reading today's Gospel text (Luke 8:26-39). First, there is the dichotomy of order and chaos. Chaos is a frightful thing in which it is impossible for life to flourish. We crave order, but there is the order of containment and the order of liberation, of freedom. The process of moving into membership in the Church of the Saviour is about finding freedom in the disciplines, in the Gospel.

Second, there is the dichotomy of power and possibility. Possibility is a word that was often used in the early days of this church. It is a word that speaks of choice, of choosing to do this or that. Power is different. It is either there or not there. Like the Kingdom of God, it is simply present, taking over our lives.

Right before today's reading, the story is about the chaos of Jesus and the disciples in a boat, and Jesus rebuking the storm. When it was written down, two or three generations after Jesus' crucifixion, it was to tell the young church that Jesus was still present with them. While the literal level of this story is good for children, when we become adults we read it differently. We notice that, just as in the story of the boat in the storm, the inbreaking of the Kingdom needs chaos.

In today's story, that chaos is in gentile territory, on the other side of the lake. There, Jesus meets a crazy, naked man to whom the villagers had given the name "Legion" – as in a Roman military unit of 4000 men. In brief, the man seemed to be beset by 4000 different inner voices. The villagers dealt with him by containment, by making him a prisoner. When Jesus comes near, he says, "Jesus, do not torment me," because everyone else who had tried to help him – social workers, police, psychiatrists – had done exactly that.

Jesus, however, allowed the man's own, tiny voice of sanity to be heard. Jesus speaks to him, as well as to the voices of chaos. The voices plead not to be sent into the boundless abyss, but to be contained in the bodies of the pigs. Jesus

does as they ask, but even so they self-destruct into the realm of death.

When the community arrives, they see the man clothed and in his right mind, conversing with Jesus. They also see that their pigs are gone. They decide that Jesus is too much of a threat, that he has to go. They were bound by their culture, their expectations, and the power of Jesus was too threatening.

We take culture automatically, unless we are taught to look at it. What make the Seekers and Church of the Saviour culture good news? Jesus, the Kingdom of God, comes to us from the future, not from the past. Where will we meet Jesus as we move towards the future?

After many years, in the face of steady debt, Potters House could not go on. A mission group of Eighth Day, the Banyan Tree, felt called to re-envision what Potter's House could be. Unfortunately, all the members of the mission group were White. One day, someone said, "We Black people are tired of you White people doing things for us. We want you to do things with us." Then, several Black people joined the mission group, and are involved in deciding the future direction of Potter's House. This was clarity coming out of chaos, a real invasion of the Kingdom of God.

I unreservedly and with abandon commit my life and destiny to Christ, — See more at:

http://wp.theoblogical.org/?page_id=3750#sthash.4WB0Xabz.dpuf

I unreservedly and with abandon commit my life and destiny to Christ, — See more at:

http://wp.theoblogical.org/?page_id=3750#sthash.4WB0Xabz.dpuf