

Genesis 12:1-9; Romans 4:13-25; Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26
The Second Sunday after Pentecost A; 06.11.23; G. Miles Smith+

We have spent the last six months worshipping our way through the greatest mysteries of the Christian faith:

- Christmas and Epiphany / the mystery of the Incarnation of God in Christ
- Holy Week / the passion and death of Christ
- Easter and the Ascension / the mystery of the resurrection of Christ
- Pentecost / the mystery of the Holy Spirit
- Trinity Sunday / the mystery of the Holy Trinity

These are always some pretty intense months of heady, heartfelt, and often beautiful worship as we return to these central mysteries of the Christian faith.

And what do we have today? There are no revelations of the mystery of God, but there are instead, in the gospel reading, stories of Jesus and...*tax collectors...sinners...the sick...and the dead.* Except for the *raising* of the dead young woman, these are more familiar areas of human life.

In the language of the church year, these are called the Sundays “after Pentecost” and this is the longest church season of them all, stretching from the Day of Pentecost until shortly after Thanksgiving Day. It is marked by the color green--we are going to see a lot of green for a long time. It is insightful, I think, to note that in the Roman Catholic tradition, they observe the same season but they call it “ordinary time”. Which in a sense is true. We are in the time after we have worshipped through the great mysteries of the Christian faith—until they return again next Christmas—and the gospel readings now for the months ahead will variously challenge us instead with *what are we going to do* about all these great revelations of God.

This kind of movement every year, from the great mysteries of faith into “ordinary time”, is helpful to keep in mind, I think, because it reminds us that *Christians will necessarily live in both of these areas of life.* We will have times when we are called deeply into faith, drawing near to God’s revelation. And we will have plenty of times when we still are called to navigate all the familiar challenges of living. We cannot live only in one world or the other—it is a both/and. *We all need to have our faith deepened and stretched by the mysteries of God in the Holy Trinity. And we need to try again to live in this world in a way that is faithful to what God has revealed.*

- It was wonderful when God spoke to Abraham...but then God also went on to say: “Go...to a new place...I will show you.”
- It was wonderful when people first met Jesus as he visited many villages in his homeland...but then Jesus would go on to say: “Follow me.” There are things we need to do.
- It was wonderful when the disciples were gathered together again with Jesus after his resurrection... but then the time came when he also told them: “Go.” And: “make disciples of all people...” (Matthew 28:16-20).

There is no standing still after the mysteries of God. We are supposed to...go...into all the usual murkiness of our lives in the world. It is supposed to be this way. We are supposed to be in “ordinary time” too.

But, honestly, even “ordinary time” really isn’t altogether ordinary. It is *familiar*—all the continuing challenges of living—money, politics, illnesses of body and mind, untimely death, and more. But once we have tasted of the great mysteries of God, even the ordinary...*is quietly woven with the extraordinary...full of God’s presence and glory.* Even our sufferings...*are accompanied by the Christ who suffered.* Our sins...*are forgiven so that we can begin again.* And our strivings...*are accompanied by the Holy Spirit our divine Advocate and Guide.*

Here we go!