

**Sermon – Saturday, October 9, 2021**

**Deacon Martha Farone**

Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

We're off to see the Wizard, the wonderful Wizard of OZ. Most of us probably remember this song and the movie. Dorothy, Toto and her friends, Scarecrow, Tin Man and Lion set off on the Yellow Brick Road to find the Wizard. Each has a specific request; home, a brain, a heart, and courage. Together they begin this part of their journey, hopeful, and excited, prepared to approach this powerful entity, anticipating results because, because, because, because, becaaaaause...of all the wonderful things he does.

Having encountered some mystical, curious, life threatening, frightening, horrific events, they've managed to procure the broomstick of the Wicked Witch of the West. Prepared to give it over to the Wizard in exchange for their yearnings, along with anticipation and excitement, there seems to be an amount of trepidation and foreboding as they approach the "throne" of this fiery, blustering entity. We know how the story ends.

So, how do you and I approach the throne of grace? Come into the loving embrace of our Creator who is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart? Naked, nothing hidden. Today's Epistle reading encourages us to approach the throne of grace with boldness.

Boldness, to some, may mean brash, swashbuckling, reckless, foolhardy. I believe boldness, in the biblical sense, isn't necessarily a personality trait. A typically soft-spoken, introverted, calm person can be bold when a typically driven, outspoken, brash person shrinks back. Boldness is acting, by the power of the Holy Spirit on an urgent conviction in the face of some threat. Spirit-empowered conviction, courage, and urgency seem to be three ingredients of boldness exhibited by those who follow Jesus' example. Without sufficient conviction that something ought to be said or done, what's there to be bold about? If there is a lack of courage, we don't have enough fiber in our conviction to face threats. Without an ample sense of urgency, we lack the fire under our feet to get us moving.

What we've learned of Jesus' human presence and short time on Earth, is sustenance to keep us from quivering in a corner because some human being might say something mean, sever a relationship, discontinue financial support, or even kill us (though not so likely for us living in this place). We read in Romans 8:38-39 that, neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, not things present nor things to come, not powers, nor height, not depth, nor anything in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer is a very real and necessary element; a connection. If one is to step out boldly, perhaps first, we must "approach the throne of grace" with expectancy that our loving God is barely a breath away. That our Creator is prepared to bless each of us with the measure of grace that we need, at that time, to go forward and get the job done. Because God knows us intimately, we may draw near in faith, have an honest talk with God, believe that what is asked in Jesus' name, will be provided, even if we don't quite understand. If we really believe that the word of

God is living and active, we are able to slip into the encompassing love and receive the grace to help in time of need.

Might it be that as we examine our hearts and minds, we'll feel lament; and express this deep outpouring of sorrow to God? Perhaps our broken hearts and God's are the same? Honestly grieving opens us to the capacity and readiness to care, to suffer, to die to ourselves, and to feel to the depths of our being, the injustices that surround us that prevent a social order that dignifies every human being-child of God- and every and all elements of creation.

Dare we ask what God has in mind for each of us? What labor of love He desires for individuals, our faith communities, the Church, to bring about a more just social order? Yes, it takes courage, conviction and a sense of urgency. And you and I are equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit, when we boldly, even with palms sweating and heart beating fiercely, openly ask to serve in His name; then with confidence, "act the miracle." I don't know about you, but it sure seems to me that our beautiful world presents us with very real "threats" and an abundance of evidence that the time of need is NOW. We've inherited a garden, we must not leave a desert, says Richard Rohr.

Kyle Collins in a Reflection on a Seasons wrote: "Our spiritual growth doesn't happen as we step blindly into "good things" or things we feel we should or ought to do. It happens as we step into the things HE has prepared and tilled the soil for. The stuff He has been prepping to grow."

In the words of William Shakespeare, "Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful." We don't need a Wizard. We have Jesus. Amen.