

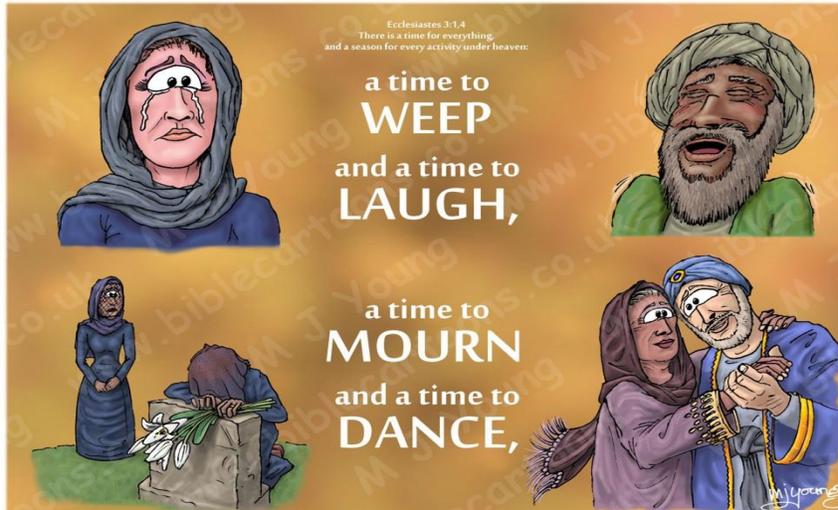
Aldersgate UMC of Butte, Montana
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www.aldersgatebutte.org - 406.782.2425
Sunday, April 4, 2021



The title of this message, as you can see, is *"Why Are You Weeping?"* There are so many things going on these days that are causing us to weep--that are causing me to weep. When times are tough I turn to Ecclesiastes 3:1-9 for comfort, strength and wisdom. It is times like these that I turn to scriptures to somehow make sense of what is going on in our world.



While this whole passage is filled with wisdom for us at different times of our lives, I turn to these verses for today:



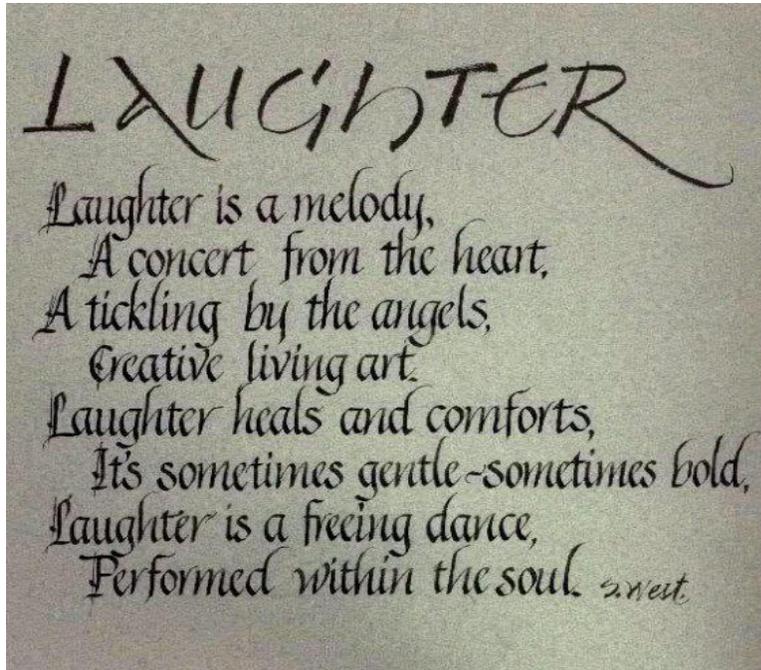
With yet another mass shooting in California following the shootings in Atlanta and Boulder, our hearts weigh heavy, once again for the families and friends of the victims not only in these shootings, but past shootings. It is sad to say, but I believe folks are becoming desensitized because they don't want to feel the same feelings over and over again. Unfortunately many just hear the news and shrug their shoulders and go about their day because it happens far too often.

It is different for those of us who have lost loved ones to gun violence. Some of you, like me, have lost loved ones to gun violence. Even though we may think we have healed from such violence, it still hurts. It still hurts! And God forbid that we ever, ever become desensitized from these tragic mass shootings.

We weep not only for those suffering from gun violence, but those who suffer from all kinds of disease including COVID. The pandemic has created a great deal of distress, of grief, and depression as well as economic hardship. Then there is weeping due to pain around prejudice, inequality, abuse in all forms, human trafficking, sex trafficking, and the pain around suicide. Then there is weeping around the future of our democracy. Not only is there weeping around the future of our democracy, but the future of our planet with global warming.

There is indeed a time to weep and weep we must, because if we don't cry out these tears, these kept emotions act like an infection in our body. Weeping is absolutely necessary for our overall health and well-being. So as I have said before, "big boys and big girls do cry."

When the tears subside, it is essential that we laugh and even dance when we can. Hear this quote on our need for laughter:



The endorphins that are produced are like a natural high helping us to simply feel better in the midst of all that is. It has been said that those who laugh freely and frequently can be the healthiest of all people.

In our scripture for today, Jesus asked these two questions, "Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?"



Imagine with me if you will, spending so much time with the Master and having to grieve that life as they knew it, would no longer exist. Imagine the community that Yeshua nourished for several years or so. Not only did they experience a depth of community unlike they have ever experienced before, this was an inclusive community with both men and women following a rabbi. Historically, women and children were not included in this way. So one can only imagine what it must've felt like for the women and children who were embraced by Yeshua. Not only were they embraced, they were treated as equals. This is the Rabbi who said, "*Let the children come unto me, do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.*"

And then there is the story of Mary & Martha that would not have happened with other Rabbis of the time. Remember how upset Martha was with Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus absorbing not only his teachings, but his presence while she was tending to the needs of the guests.

Knowing how inclusive Jesus was in word and action, it is not a surprise that the first one to experience the risen Christ -- was a woman.

Before Jesus was arrested, their lives had purpose and meaning as they learned the mystical truths of the kingdom of God where everyone was equal in the eyes of God. No one was better and no one was worse. All were created in the image of God! No wonder the religious establishment had difficulty with Yeshua because he was upsetting the status quo. Whether we like it or not, the gospel is not meant to maintain the status quo. Instead we hear this quote from Garrison Keillor: "*The Gospel is meant to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.*"

While Jesus walked this earth the Gospel was being lived in doing just that: *comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable*. If we do not understand this, then we do not understand the vision of Yeshua who taught us to pray: "*thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*"

We hear this second question from Jesus, *“For whom are you looking?”* Mary Magdalene had not yet recognized Yeshua, the Risen Christ and was weeping the loss of her Lord. Then she recognizes Jesus and exclaims in Aramaic: *“Rabbouni!”*

Take note that she did not recognize Jesus until Yeshua called her by name. I wonder if that is true for some of us that we have not really seen Jesus or have recognized Jesus until we are called by name. Listen, can you hear Yeshua calling you by name? Listen.

Once we hear our name being called, it changes everything. Now we have a decision to make. **Do we or do we not answer the call of being a follower of Jesus Christ?** Striving to be a follower of Christ is a lifelong journey and does not end until we take our last breath here on earth.

Mary Magdalene was the first evangelist to proclaim the Good News!

She was the first to say, *“I have seen the Lord!”*

This is huge in a patriarchal society where women and children were meant to be seen and not heard. This is huge in a male dominated society where one might expect that Jesus would first appear to Peter, but Yeshua did not. I wondered how the disciples felt about this when they heard Mary Magdalene proclaim, *“I have seen the Lord!”*

Now the \$64,000 question is: “Have you seen the Lord?”

Yes, I have seen the Lord which makes the pain of this world bearable. Without the promise of the kingdom of God that Jesus taught when he said in John 18:36: *“My kingdom is not of this world,”* I am not sure I could remain true to being a follower of Yeshua.

Knowing that Jesus was ushering in the kingdom of God and not the kingdoms that have come and gone over many millenia. *“My kingdom is not of this world,”* helps me to keep things in perspective from a God point of view.

In addition to this promise from Yeshua, is this hymn by Natalie Sleeth, entitled, "Hymn of Promise". Listen to verse one:

*In the bulb there is a flower, in the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons a hidden promise, butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter, there is a spring that waits to be
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

God speaks to us in the here and now offering words of hope, comfort, as we dwell in the mystery ... the mystery of comfort and sorrow, in the mystery of life and of death. Hear these words from verse two of Hymn of Promise:

*There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody
There's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds a mystery,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

Let us prepare for the Sacrament of Holy Communion as we sing this hymn:

Hymn of Preparation # 707

Hymn of Promise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haaWgvIXFI>