

“Beware of the Slippery Ones”

Matthew 7:15-29 Traci Hubbard

Life is a jungle. The recent three months of The Occupy

Movement prove that living in this world is hard for 99% of us.

The false piece of what I just stated is that the 1% has a hard time

too, but with other types of misery. The lie we have all chosen to

believe at some time in our journey is: if we only had something

else, the “else” we have convinced ourselves will make us happy,

if we only had what that person has, all would be well. Really?

Today’s headlines from the television media were: “A war on

words or a war on more”. Let’s see if this headline is true.

Yesterday, I read a story on the internet about a man walking

Central Park, New York. Suddenly, he sees a little girl being

attacked by a pit bull dog. He runs over and begins fighting with

the dog. He succeeds in killing the dog and saving the girl's life.

A policeman who was watching the scene walks over and says,
'You are a hero, tomorrow you can read it in all the newspapers,
'Brave New Yorker saves the life of little girl'.

The man says, 'But I am not a New Yorker!'

'Oh, then it will say in newspapers in the morning, "Brave
American saves life of little girl", ' the policeman answers.

'But I am not an American!' says the man.

'Oh, what are you then?'

'The man says: - 'I am a Saudi!'

The next day the newspapers say, 'Islamic extremist kills innocent
American dog.'

Every day many of us tune into the news so we believe that we
are intelligent and currently informed people that we believe we
are. If the story I just shared with you were true, and we woke up
this morning to read in *The Globe and Mail* that an Islamic

extremist killed an American or Canadian dog, I know our friends Shannon, Margot and Teresa, our animal lovers, would be among the first to be very upset about the news. And if the story was said to have taken place in this very neighborhood, well we would be signing petitions and taking our demand for *our* justice directly to the right person we believe could arrange such justice.

Imagine that all of us here today are on the doorstep of our MLA with our newspapers in hand, learning that the person who saved a little girl from being killed by a dog was actually a Saudi who was acting out of his highest self on behalf of another! What would we be thinking now and how would our new thoughts and feelings lead us to act? Would we be like the educated church leaders who were listening to Jesus in the shadows while he was completing his Sermon on the Mount? Would we be and murmuring amongst ourselves, "Crucify him?" And, would we get the job done only to learn that Jesus was the real McCoy, a holy human who showed

the world how to know the life giving way, the life giving truth and the life giving life?

Thoughts and words begin wars. Let's look at some more words.

President McKinley told the American people that the USS Maine had been sunk in Havana Harbor by Spanish mine. The American people, outraged by this apparent unprovoked attack, supported the Spanish American War. The Captain of the USS Maine had insisted the ship was sunk by a coal bin explosion, investigations after the war proved that such had indeed been the case. There had been no mine.

Hitler used this principle of lying to his own people to initiate an invasion. He told the people of Germany that Poland had attacked first and staged fake attacks against German targets. The Germans, convinced they were being threatened, followed Hitler into Poland and into World War 2.

FDR claimed Pearl Harbor was a surprise attack. It wasn't. The United States saw war with Japan as the means to get into war with Germany, which Americans opposed. So Roosevelt needed Japan to appear to strike first. Following an 8-step plan devised by the Office of Naval Intelligence, Roosevelt intentionally provoked Japan into the attack. Contrary to the official story, the fleet did not maintain radio silence, but sent messages intercepted and decoded by US intercept stations. Tricked by the lie of a surprise attack, Americans marched off to war.

President Johnson lied about the Gulf of Tonkin to send Americans off to fight in Vietnam. There were no torpedoes in the water in the Gulf. LBJ took advantage of an inexperienced sonar man's report to goad Congress into escalating the Vietnam War.

In the book, "The Art of War", Sun Tzu said, "All war is based on deception". In Ecclesiastes, the author tells us that "There is nothing new under the sun," and I believe this is true. History

repeats its true and false themes throughout human choices on a continual basis and the responsibility to discern between what is true and life giving and what is false and life stealing is up to us. But the good news is we are not alone. John tells us in Chapter 14:7 and 15:26 that every one of us has been anointed with the indwelling of the Spirit of our Creator, therefore, the presence of God continually abides within us. Why is this good news? Because the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God has a holy purpose in mind for our highest good and this is to comfort us, to guide us into discerning what is true, to teach us about the holy mystery of life and to convict us. “Convict”, a scary word in the United Church of Canada because it speaks to another dreadful word called “sin”. Folks, the definition of ‘sin’ is defined as “missing the mark”. We miss the mark, the truths that will nourish our souls when we choose to do the work of discernment without the Spirit’s help and therefore wage war within ourselves, when we choose to

believe we can walk this physical journey as spiritual beings without walking with the Spirit.

I believe the Scriptures hold life giving threads – ropes of absolute truths - that we can build our lives upon with security. Why do we need divine insurance? Because when the winds blow, and they will, and the waters of life threatened to overtake us, and they will threaten, we will not be destroyed because we have built our faith upon the nature of God and not the nature of serving ourselves.

We have a passionate voice for justice in our faith community that has reached out and asked the question, “How do I discern what is a worthy cause where I may place my spiritual energies? How do I discern from the news and my passionate responses what is true and what is simply my stuff muddying the waters?” This person, I believe, is teaching all of us what it looks like to seek the advice of the One who abides within us.

So here are some of the absolutes I believe we can all hang our hats on today.

History proves that people and culture are constantly changing.

And even though Government laws are set in stone and often have difficulty interpreting things that their creators could not foresee, our Creator, being full of timeless holy wisdom, teaches us that what super cedes the letter of the law is the spirit of the law. What this means is what our Government courts are trying to learn. Everything we think and do begins and ends with intention. Intention must be proven for judgement decisions to be made.

And here is an absolute truth: Where we choose to place our trust will decide the outcome of our storms in life.

Another absolute truth I believe truth is this: We are all created in the image of God whose nature is holy love, holy justice, holy kindness and holy mercy.

Another absolute: (as precept relies upon precept, is we are all created with the freedom to love God, or love ourselves and become our own God. Before we are out of our mother's womb, our own spirits are stirring with wordless intention around the sacred contracts and purposes we have co-created with God to accomplish on our physical journeys and our souls are thinking. Then we begin to toddle and desire the objects of our affection as we grow into cognitive awareness and begin saying "MINE MINE MINE." Then we learn ways to accomplish getting what we believe is rightly ours at any cost. We begin nurturing our own self-interest which is part of why we are here, to learn how to love our neighbors as ourselves. As Pam Gaudette says, "The short and the long of it is" we are here to learn how to not be selfish. In other words, we are here, just like Jesus, to learn through the things that we suffer how to be transformed into the image and kingdom of God.

This absolute truth is clearly found in the 7th chapter of Romans. However, this truth runs like a scarlet thread through the entire Bible. Matthew shares the truth of our struggle with us in his analogies of healthy trees that bear fruit and the kind of foundation that is trustworthy on which to build a home. Folks, I believe the truth we need to hear from Jesus's conclusion in his sermon is this: The foundation for the seat of our souls, the home for our heart, is where the Spirit of God abides and that is within the presence of the pliable rock of the Holy which is the unchanging nature and promises of God within us. The cool thing about this foundation and home is that we don't have to take out home owners insurance! We don't have to live in fear about the rain and the soul quakes that come our way because our insurance is out of this world!

I realize that the truth is also we are all at war with the better and lesser angels of ourselves. We are at war as life presents

opportunities for us to choose to live into the nature and image of God that we have been created in, or the nature of self-interest that we deceive ourselves into believing is for the highest good of all. And this is our human and spiritual condition. We are free to choose to become the better or lesser angels of our nature. And here's the clincher. Our most powerful enemy is not the storms of life that come our way, or our losses and tragedies, our experiences of betrayal and abandonment from someone or some institution we loved and trusted. Our most powerful enemy is not that culture is constantly changing or that we are all getting older and our bodies aren't performing the way we want them to. Our most powerful enemy is not the object of our affection that we fear we may lose someone we love one day. Our slippery enemy isn't Flip Wilson's idea of the devil, for none of us need help in missing the mark. Our slippery enemy that we all face is self-deception.

All of us have at one time, or if you are like me, at many times, have chosen to go at it alone, believing that we don't need to consult with God about where to plant our energies. Aren't we surprised when the sink hole sucks us in and makes a public display of our self centered arrogance? Aren't we shocked and angry when someone who loves us calls us gently out of our sink hole, like Nathan when David demanded that the thief be brought before him so he could punish him? And aren't we humbled when our wise friend places their arm around us like Nathan placed his around Israel's beloved king and said, "You are that man".

Another absolute truth is that when we choose to serve our own self-interests, we are playing God and building on a sink hole that by nature can only sink and we have no one to blame but ourselves. So what was that good news again? How can we discern where to place our trust when scripture text after text reminds us that we are spiritually blind and need the Holy Spirit to

turn on the light so we do not choose to live as people who dwell in darkness? The answer is we have a forgiving God abiding inside of us and we all have built inside of our physical and spiritual cells everything we need for our journey. The one who created us abides within each of us. and this truth enables us to love our neighbor as ourselves. We can do this because we are free to choose to see that the God who made us, dwells within all, even the Saudi, and thanks be to God, even in this Texan.

The news will be true and false to us because it is written by humans. The Government will be true and false because it is run by humans. Our spouses, children and friends will hurt us because they are humans. We will hurt and betray ourselves, and then others, because we are fighting our own inner war with the better and lesser angels of our nature.

This brings us to our present global war. Did the government of the United States and Great Britain lie to the American and British

people, more to the point, did President Bush and Tony Blair lie to to initiate a war of conquest in Iraq? This question has been given currency by a memo leaked from inside the British Government which clearly indicates a decision to go to war followed by the "fixing" of information around that policy. This is, as they say, a smoking gun. But the fact is that long before this memo surfaced, it had become obvious that the US Government, aided by that of Great Britain, was lying to create the public support for a war in Iraq. Tony Blair's "Dodgy Dossier", is a document released by the Prime Minister that made many of the claims used to support the push for war. The dossier soon collapsed when it was revealed that much of it had been plagiarized from a student thesis paper that was 12 years old! The contents of the dossier, however much they seemed to create a good case for invasion, were obsolete and outdated. This use of material that could not possibly be relevant at the time is clear proof of a deliberate attempt to deceive. Then there was the claim about the "Mobile biological

weapons laboratories". Proffered in the absence of any real laboratories in the wake of the invasion, photos of these trailers were shown on all the US Mainstream Media, with the claim they while seeming to lack anything suggesting biological processing, these were part of a much larger assembly of multiple trailers that churned out biological weapons of mass destruction.

The chief proponent of this hoax was Colin Powell, who presented illustrations such as this one to the United Nations on February 5th, 2003. This claim fell apart when it was revealed that these trailers were nothing more than hydrogen gas generators used to inflate weather balloons. This fact was already known to both the US and UK, as a British company manufactured the units and sold them to Iraq.

There were no weapons of mass destruction. What the world and history has once again discovered through the War on Terror is that we are our own Weapons of Self Destruction and the only

war we need to concern ourselves with is the one we all fight within. So the question we really need to focus on is the one our Creator asks all of us: "Tell me Traci...who will you say that I am because your answer will determine who you serve and where you hang your hat. Traci, who do you say who the person was that helped save that little girl's life in the dog attack?" The news of the Holy will always turn on the light of the Divine to help guide us into all we need to become the better angels of our nature while we live inside the jungle of ourselves. In the art of our true holy war inside of us, all love is based on the fact that we all need the grace of God.] and we all have a place to call home. Namaste.