

11th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B
August 5, 2018
2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a
Ephesians 4:1-16

In story we find healing

In the name of the living, loving God. Amen.

“In orca’s tragedy, we see our own.”

That was the headline in *The Seattle Times* on Thursday
as the orca mother carried her dead calf for the ninth straight day.
Tahlequah the mother orca whale has certainly captured my family’s attention
as well as people around the globe with her refusal to part with her dead child.
This mother orca whale is one of 75 endangered southern resident whales
that criss-cross the straits and sounds around the San Juan Islands
and Canada’s Gulf islands.
They have not had a successful pregnancy in three years
and marine biologists are eager to learn more about this most recent death.
This story has prompted breakfast table conversations at my house
about grief, climate change, environmentalism, recycling, and endangered species.
While tragic, her story is prompting conversations around the globe
which will hopefully bring about change and healing.

The mother orca is telling her story through her refusal to relinquish her dead calf.
It’s hard to know what she is experiencing and feeling,
but her grief seems palpable as she dives down deep to retrieve the calf
each time she drops it.

We recognize her pain as she falls behind the pod,
struggling to keep up due to her fierce determination to carry this lost child.

We have seen her community surround her with support,
at times even carrying the child for her to give her respite.
Her family has gathered near, more of them traveling together than is typical,
we can only assume out of empathy and solidarity with this grieving mother.

As coastal people who occasionally glimpse one of these magnificent creatures
in our own backyard, this mother’s story is personal.

Her grief is our grief and her story intersects with our own.

As we talked about in the sermon last week, telling our stories,
even when they are hard, traumatic, and full of sorrow
gives access to a healing journey.

That is what I hope you heard out of Bathsheba’s difficult story which we heard more of today.

To very briefly recount for those who missed it, here are the Cliff notes:

Bathsheba’s husband Uriah was at war, fighting for his king.

During that time, King David raped Bathsheba and left her pregnant.

David brought Uriah back from the battlefield

in an attempt to cover up his sin and was unsuccessful.

David then ensured Uriah’s death.

When Bathsheba's time of mourning was over, David took her, like a possession,
into his home and added her to his collection of wives.

That particular child died, but they went on to have other children, including Solomon.

We pick up the story today with Nathan telling David a parable
in which the punchline has David exposing himself as the evil one who has done much wrong.

As this story just gets worse and worse I wonder why do we have this text at all?

Why didn't the editors take it out?

Is it here to teach us a lesson?

Is it here to make us hate King David?

Perhaps Bathsheba's story is one meant to inspire those who struggle and suffer.

For at the end of David's life,

Bathsheba and Nathan are co-conspirators in getting Solomon on the throne
instead of another son to David.

Bathsheba ends this story strong.

When Bathsheba's story ends she is a queen and a survivor.

We are inclined to look for the work of God where we see power

and not to look for the work of God when we see need and vulnerability.

Often, those who are vulnerable and in need have the most to teach us about the work of God.

Perhaps that is why Bathsheba's story remains

as a testament to surviving.

As Gennifer Benjamin Brooks said,

"Bathsheba as a woman in her society,

was powerless to call David to account for what he had done to her.

Whether recorded or not, God saw what had been done to Bathsheba.

She too was a child of God, with all the rights and privileges of God's favor.

And any word that speaks of divine justice is directed to all who have been abused

and offers them justice whether or not they are called by name."

In the past week, some of you have shared your stories with me and for that I am saddened.

I am saddened by the reality of experiences of women in our society.

It grieves me that so many of us have experienced harassment, abuse, and assault

in the very places in which we should be most safe;

in our homes, our churches and schools, in our marriages and friendships,
and simply walking down the street.

What that tells me is we need to keep talking.

We need to continue sharing our stories for that is how our healing journeys begin,
one story at a time, one conversation at a time.

That is how change happens as we initiate radical communal healing

and take the first steps towards eradicating sexual violence in our own day.

These stories, Bathsheba's story, Tamar's story, OUR stories are vitally important.

They are critical for healing.

And the reality of our God, a God who seeks justice for all people,

is that we are seen and heard, even when we keep silent.

In today's letter from Paul to the Ephesians, he writes,

"I therefore, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called,
with all humility and gentleness, with patience,
bearing with one another in love,
making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit
in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3).

This speaks to the heart of the matter.

God calls us, each and every one of us to lead a life worthy of the calling
to which we have been called. That means you, and you, and you, and me.

We are called to treat one another with dignity,
with humility and gentleness, with patience and kindness.

That means we don't touch one another without consent.

That means we respect one another's choices even if it isn't the choice we would make.

That means creating a safe environment for all people, especially children,
for women, for the disabled, and the elderly.

That is what bearing with one another in love means.

That's what *making an effort to maintain the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace* means.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said,

"The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption;
the end is the creation of the Beloved Community.

It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends...

It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men."

This is what we are striving for when we seek the Kingdom of God.

We strive for the love which brings about miracles in the hearts of all people.

That is the transformative journey of healing through which we find reconciliation.

May we find this unity of Spirit together.