

## GRASPING THE MOMENT

Almost every week, I hear someone say or post on Face book, “Thank goodness it’s Friday.” For most people, that declaration, is a celebration of hope and relief. For me, being reminded that it’s Friday, causes a bit of stress and anxiety, as I contemplate what I still have to do before Sunday.

Generally, it’s fine to look forward to time off or a special occasion, such as Christmas. *And, by the way, in case you haven’t watched TV or been to a store, the Christmas season is upon us and Advent starts next Sunday.*

It’s okay to plan a special trip or event and be excited about it, yet... something is very wrong if the dreams for tomorrow / the anticipation is what gets us through the day / is what sustains us.

When we live for tomorrow, then we are not living, and if we leap from one hyped up event to another, then .....we are missing out of much of our lives. People do that because they disdain their current, everyday existence; it’s too uncomfortable..... or ... because they think life should be filled with only highs and thrills. The reality is that most of life is spent in “common time.”

Today, marks the end of the liturgical year. Since Pentecost, we have been in “common time.” Common time is the longest season of the church calendar, and rightly so. Life is lived in “common time.” The new year begins with Advent.

Advent and Christmas can be a wonderful, enchanting time of the year; however, it is only a small part of the year, and we do ourselves a disservice and set ourselves up for disappointment if place too much attention and hope .... on any special occasion.

Studies have shown that the anticipation / the excitement for a planned holiday usually is far greater than the actual event turns out to be. Often there is disappointment and there is regret for spending so much money with so little gain.

Most of us know that, yet we keep repeating the pattern..... because we believe the mundane of day to day existence is boring, painful or not worth our time and focus.

Check your photo collection when you get home, I bet most of your photos are from special occasions, holidays or big events.

My photo memoirs leap from one “special” event to the next.

We rarely take picture of our daily routines, and I think that indicates that we don’t appreciate “common time”, that we are not living in the moment and therefore missing out on most of our lives.

No doubt, sometimes the present is very comfortable, and maybe unbearable. Sometimes extreme dread does come to visit.

The Biblical prophets often spoke to people in very difficult times, and they would offer encouragement with reasons to be hopeful for the future, as in today's Jeremiah text.

Even so, those visions for the future were anchored in the present, and the present was connected to the past.

The images of a hopeful future were often conditional, and they were intended to improve life in the present tense.

Also, past experiences with God and past failures were frequently part of the whole picture that the prophets painted.

Living in present / in the moment requires memory—recalling experiences and lessons. The past puts NOW in proper context.

Living in the moment / in the now also demands an awareness of consequences, and consequences help form the future.

We need the expanse of possibilities, ...of dreams ...and the knowledge of accountability in order to fully value and engage adequately in the present moment.

Without an awareness of tomorrow, we'd be tempted to be reckless, wasteful and even worse.....ruthless.

Really / fully living in common time, in a healthy way / grasping each moment requires that we focus on the NOW, remember the past and possess a realistic vision for tomorrow.

And, the realistic vision is important.

Creating false hopes, for ourselves or to others, is not only a lie, but it can steal / take away the ability to BE in the moment..... as we need to be.

Telling a terminally ill person that he's going to make it, he can fight and win, drains valuable energy and thoughts away from his remaining precious moments to be..... to be with those he loves.

Moreover, young athletes must be encouraged to enjoy the game and to get a good education.... because they likely won't make it in the NHL.

Our view of tomorrow needs to be realistic, so we can honestly live in the now,.... and base our hope on what is worthy of our investment.

Psalm 46 presents this very message:

Reminding the reader that God is a very present help in trouble, **in the now**.

The Psalmist continues with encourage for tomorrow without letting go of the present, stressing that we need not waste our energy on fear and worry.

God is with us, NOW, was with us in the past and will be present in the tomorrow.

And, verse 10 presents a quote from God. It is a message to help us stop and focus – to grasp the moment.

“Be still and know that I am God.”

Those are good words to remember... when we lose hold of life / of living in the moment.

The Gospel lesson for the last Sunday of the liturgical year is about Jesus’ relationship with those around him as he was hanging on the cross.

Most of us have been through some tough times, and we can imagine ugly situations when we’d rather not have to “Engage / live in the moment”, yet...

I think being the big entertainment while torturously being slowly killed is about as extreme as it gets.

Throughout human history, executions were a popular form of entertainment. The soldiers and crowd were there for the show, and many mocked Jesus, too.

They were “caught up” in the moment. They were not grasping what was going on. The event and the mass mania had control of them.

In hyped up frenzy, the past is forgotten and the future is ignored, and thus..... so is really being in the moment.

In spite of the anguish, pain and humiliation, Jesus was in the moment, and even had compassion for the abusers..... because of their ignorance.

Jesus asked God to forgive them because they didn’t know what they were doing. His request presents some interesting theological twists.

Still, it showed that Jesus was considering their past.... and their future... as he was keenly feeling the moment.

Then Luke presents the dialogue with the two criminals being crucified with Jesus.

What so important about two nameless criminals?

Why include them in this passion narrative?

???

Who cares about the nameless store clerk who takes our money?  
Why care about a stranger standing next to us?  
????

Obviously, they were there. They were part of Jesus' moment, at that time. They were part of the picture.

The first criminal, failed to appreciate his few last precious moments.  
He neglected his past and dismissed the future... as he tried to save his own hide, as he tried to escape.

The second criminal was cognizant of his past mistakes—he remembered, and he acknowledged that he deserved what he was getting, revealing an understanding of consequences.... of the future.

His was a realistic view, and so he asked Jesus to merely “remember him.”  
The second man,..... knew who was with him in that very moment.  
He grasped the severity of the moment.  
His moment with Jesus / with the divine.... was NOT lost.

Tenderly, Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, TODAY you will be with me in paradise.”

This was a beautiful, compassionate exchange of two people vividly engaged in the moment.

Life is much too short to skip over even the mundane days.  
Even painful events, may provide opportunities for salvation.

So many things are missed when we neglect to grasp each moment.

We need to Remember the past, have a realistic vision for tomorrow and engage in the moment.  
Our life is NOW.

So, cherish each moment, and take picture of loved ones in the common time / in the daily routines.

In a minute we will be lighting candles in remembrance of loved ones.

As we recall loved ones who have left us, we grieve the absence of their presence and of their love.

We really don't miss the big events with them. The unusual, special holiday spent together is not what causes our hearts to break.

We miss the little things. We miss the relationship in common time.

We miss the goodnight kiss, ...the phone calls, ...the gentle touch, ...the hugs and the smiles, and even the minor quirks and idiosyncrasies that we experienced in the mundane day to day.

Moreover, our regrets are.... **or** will be... over the missed opportunities to be present. We will regret failing to grasp the moment with loved ones.

Life is precious and so are all of those around us.

Let us remember. Let us see clearly, and may we truly BE... now.  
God is in each moment.

And, so....Let us BE Still..... in a moment of silence.

Amen.