

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

February 18, 2018 1st Sunday in Lent

Old Testament Reading; Genesis 9: 8-17

Responsive Reading; Psalm 25: 1-10

Epistle Reading; 1st Peter 3: 18-22

Gospel Reading; Mark 1: 9-15

Sermon Title: A TIME TO WEEP AND A TIME TO WANDA

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Jesus gave us a blue print for life and some of his children give us a choreography for the dance.

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

That is the gospel to believe in. That is God’s promise to Peter and that is God’s promise to Wanda and that is God’s promise to each and every one of us.

Man discriminates but God does not.

Shortly after John Kennedy was assassinated a bus careened off a mountain road and sixty people lost their lives. The news did not even mention it. To the news JFK was more important than sixty human beings. That was how people saw it but God held every one of those bus passengers in his hands just as securely as he did the President of the United States.

God makes a wonderful promise to us with a huge exclamation mark.

In our Old Testament Lesson God tells Noah and his sons that he is putting the rainbow in the heavens as a sign of his commitment to never again destroy the world with a flood.

“Then God spoke to Noah and his sons with him, saying: ‘And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood: never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said: This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth... and I will look on it to remember

the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”

At this point I throw out to the LGBT that the rainbow is not yours exclusively. You do have ownership, but no more ownership than the cows and dogs and birds. All flesh of the earth shares that covenant with you.

God is good all the time and to all his creatures. He is good but that does not mean there is no suffering. Carole and I can attest to that having been part of our departed spouse’s suffering for what to us humans was a very long time.

In our Epistle Paul says, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”

Our responsive reading from the 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm is one of David’s Psalms. David went through a lot but the 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm is very upbeat. David petitions God and asks God not to let his enemies triumph over him but he does not boo hoo but instead says, “Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For you are the God of my salvation; On you I wait all the day.” David suffered but he did not pity himself or try to bring attention to his suffering.

David loved God and lived for God. David could not do enough for God and neither could Wanda.

Those of us who knew Wanda knew that Wanda was not a proper noun. Wanda was a verb. Wanda was a synonym for: to love, to encourage, to console, to make someone happy, to make someone laugh, to hide her pain in an effort to not bring someone down by feeling sorry for her and you can add to this list as you remember her.

If Wanda were physically here right now, hips screaming, shoulder throbbing and treak making her unable to talk she would motion Carole closer so she could lift herself up on screaming hips and reach up with a throbbing shoulder so she could hug Carole and cry for her.

This world has been blessed with some very special women like Lady Di, Mother Teresa and I believe that Wanda would fit in that company.

Jesus gave us a blueprint for living but Jesus never wanted us not to enjoy the journey. Life should be a beautiful dance even with its share of hardships. Jesus gave us Wanda to give us choreography of how to dance when a lesser person would be crying in their beer.

There is a time to weep as Carole and I know too well, and as you also weep for our loss and your loss too. When the weeping is done it is time to Wanda. It is time to love, it is time to encourage, it is time to console and it is time to dance. Hallelujah and amen!