

**Sermon for Second Sunday after Pentecost
Proper 4B – June 3, 2018
Church of Reconciliation, San Antonio
The Rev. Judith L. Rhodes**

Never to be lost. Forever, to belong.

From my earliest years, I remember various members of my family saying about me, “Judy, you march to the beat of a different drummer.” There were times when I heard this largely as criticism. But more often I heard this statement and knew, way down deep inside me, that there was more than a grain of truth about it. I didn’t know what “the truth” about me was yet, but I trusted I would discover glimpses of it throughout my life. And I have. And I still do.

You see, I believe that as a disciple of Jesus Christ, you and I are called to march to the beat of a different drummer. We are called to march to the wild and often times mysterious rhythms that are inspired by the Holy Spirit and lead us to the precipice of risk and change- laying down tired ways, old beliefs, stale patterns of living that no longer contribute to the vitality and resourcefulness that God has given to each and every one of us in purely unique ways.

Some of you know that very recently, I resigned as President of the Board of Abode Home and even from the Board itself. It was not an easy or simple decision to make. I love all things Abode and my relationship to the Abode contemplative community remains a life-line for me, spiritually, emotionally, and deeply personally. I will serve on the Advisory Committee and on two strategic teams, Staffing and Education. On Friday, we hosted a thank you celebration at Los Patios and over 100 volunteers, staff, Founders, friends and families of our guests gathered to celebrate those who have graced our lives, even as they died, and to express our profound gratitude to those who continue to support our mission. I also recently applied to Oblate School of Theology to complete a two-year program, *Forrest Dwelling: Spirituality for Our Wisdom Years*, beginning in early 2019. Needless to say, I am awaiting to hear if I am accepted. However, I am very excited about the possibilities this program presents with deep immersion into contemplative practices, personal vocational discernment, all the while learning the new contours and landscapes of my own wisdom years. And there is the exciting potential of offering new learnings, perspectives, and practices for this community as together we embark on traversing our Wisdom Years in one another’s company. It promises to be exciting!

In the background, I can honestly “hear” my mother (and other family members upon hearing the news of my applying for a program called, “Forrest Dwelling...,” murmur, “Hmmm, not much has changed in all these years. You really do march to the beat of a different drummer.” To which, after all these years, I can own with great joy and some real satisfaction.

So, how do you and I survive the judgments, criticisms, limitations, and opinions of others that somehow would seek to box us in, limit our horizons, if not downright contribute to losing one’s confidence and losing sight of our divinely given potential? What are the practices that give meaning and perspective to your life? Wherever you are on your journey, how do you nurture that part of you that is your Spirit? And how, in a Christian community, can we accompany one another with love, respect, and compassion, as we hold to diverse opinions and perspectives?

For me, the answer has been a strong foundation of prayer and meditation on Scripture. Some of you know that my personal email address is revjudy139@gmail.com.

The “139” is not some random set of numbers. In fact, it references what I have come to name as the “song of my soul”, Psalm 139. In all honesty, I can’t recall who first introduced this psalm to me, but my sense is, it came to me at a very early age... mysteriously, as if I was born singing its verses to carry me through the sometimes very difficult terrain of my life.

Yes, as a precocious girl child, there is truth to the fact that I loved being different. That I had this active, mystical kind of spiritual imagination from very early on... and I counted the women saints of the church, Catherine of Siena, in particular, a friend.

And it was this Psalm 139, that somehow gave me confidence and perspective that I was known, really known, for being exactly as I was, exactly as I am, exactly as I will be; that every thought, gesture, or decision, good, bad or downright ugly, is already known. Not one thing I can think, say, or do, comes as a shock to my Creator. *“Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it altogether.”* Now there have been words come bounding off my tongue over the years for which I have begged forgiveness. And that confession is good for the soul. And thanks be to God, some words not my own have been given me to say in very difficult moments, for which I am deeply humbled and grateful. Words, I am sure you know, are pure gift.

Although this psalm is a song of my soul, I ask that today, you take these words to your heart. Hear them sung to you. Experience in them, the profound and boundless love your Creator has for you. Feel the power of this psalm as it assures us that we are known, comprehended, understood, and secure in the love of our Creator from whom nothing can separate us. The foundational truth of this psalm is that every single one of us, made in the image and likeness of God, belongs. We belong to this infinite Love that “made us in secret” and we are given to one another to love and respect on this earthly pilgrimage. This psalm in its entirety does not promise easy travel. What it does promise is that through trial and tribulation, in birth and in death, and in all circumstances in between, we are loved, we will be forgiven, and we are healed.

But wait, there’s more! If you are the parent, the grandparent, the aunt, or a friend of exasperating children and teens, hear these words spoken on behalf of those young people still finding their way... Make way for their searching and your own, befriend others who, themselves, are searching, and perhaps, give yourself over to being a kind and loving presence for others as life unfolds its surprises, upheavals, and miracles all along the way.

The rhetoric we hear all around us is so toxic. Words are weapons of mass destruction and each of us must remain disciplined and prayerful in our thinking, our speaking, our communicating of all kinds. As a parish that is embarking on the 50th anniversary of our founding, how are we being called anew to serve the reconciling and healing mission of our God? How are we called not only to celebrate our DNA but also to live the risk and challenges of this new day and time marching in the Way of Jesus?

In this season of endings and beginnings, of graduations and matriculations, of birthdays and anniversaries, of weddings, and yes, of leave-takings and moving away, this is a psalm that will travel lightly with you. Psalm 139 insists that wherever we go, we are accompanied on every road, down every pathway, known and unknown. ***Never to be lost. Forever to belong.***

Amen.