



Proper 13, Year C – June 27, 2010

Jesus Never Slept in Jerusalem

A Homily preached by the Rev'd Tara Livingston

We hear very little about Jesus in his first 30 years of life. I imagine him working and loving, studying and praying. I imagine him having a home, one near his parents, perhaps, as he plies his trade of either stone cutting or carpentry. If he was hanging out in Nazareth it is a mere stones throw away from Sephoris, a booming little metropolis in the Roman Empire where the wealthy inhabitants had intricate stone floors laid in their receiving rooms. While I was visiting there I could almost see Joseph and Jesus, a lunch of bread and fruit tied tightly in a cloth swung over their shoulders, walking down through the valley to work on the stone mansions of Sephoris.

In the story of Jesus' life that was passed on around camp fires and in thatched roof houses we never hear of him sleeping in Jerusalem. When he begins his ministry, his ministry of giving hope to the poor and isolated and providing them a way of living that would lead them out of oppression, he spends his time on the shores of a lake among the meagre fishermen. He travels the shores spreading his message and encouraging those who heard it to go out and spread it even more.

On the rare occasion that he does go "up" to Jerusalem where he roughs up the powers that be, he speaks truth to those in authority but he never accepts an offer to stay in any of the luscious homes found there. Rather he descends through the Kidron Valley, up the Mount of Olives and then onto Bethany, a sleepy little village, where his friends live and work. He visits the centre of power but he never stays there. He speaks to those in authority but he never becomes one of them. As he continues his ministry, aware of the difficult destiny that lies before him, he is a man who has no home. "Foxes have holes, birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no where to lay his head." Jesus is speaking to that inner longing that all of humanity shares for something firm, something consistent; he is speaking about that universal desire for solid ground. Bethany, where Mary Magdalene is purported to have lived, and Peter's mother in laws how were likely the closest thing to a home that he had throughout his ministry.

He heals the sick, cures the blind and casts out demons and then, his eyes set firmly on Jerusalem he prepares to leave those who have loved him. This final trek into the halls of power is one he knows he must take; he knows that he has done all that he can for those who follow him and that it is time that they embark on their own journey, one that is separate from his.

When Ansley asked me to preach on this, my final Sunday in my current position, I happily agreed. When I read the Gospel reading, this one where Jesus refers to his "homelessness", I asked Ansley if she'd set me up. While assuring me that she had not, she also reminded me that I am not the Son of Man. But here is one of the interesting parts of being a Christian, when the readings directly reflect how you are feeling at any given time

Foxes have holes, birds have nests but I have no place to lay my head. Well, literally I do, a lovely home that I like to come home to filled with people who love me and whom I love. It is only when I step outside of my self imposed cocoon that I fall into an abyss with no bottom; tumbling, turning, churning and waiting for the solid ground to rise up to meet me.

When I arrived here at Christ Church at the beginning of February I jokingly said that I had lost my mojo, but that was no joke. I had no confidence in my ability to preach, to teach or to preside. I had no confidence in my ability to connect, to

journey with you or to learn. To my great surprise and with extraordinary gratitude to each and every one of you I got my mojo back. I have regained my confidence through Ansley's extraordinary generosity that gently supported me from behind, encouraging me to fly. I experienced a community that was as eager to learn as I was eager to teach. I experienced a community that was as hungry to welcome me as I was hungry to be welcomed. I experienced a generosity of spirit in gifts of time, money and talent that has renewed my faith in the power of a faithful community.

Many of you have expressed concern about what my future holds and you will never know what that has meant to me. But just as Jesus firmly set his face towards whatever God had in store for him, I too set my face towards the future, as uncertain as it is. And this I must make clear. God has brought me thus far, a journey that has had taking me on a very winding path, and God will lead me through the next chapter of my journey.

Upon my ordination when I was asked what it was like I replied that it was like putting on my own skin. It was an outward and visible sign of what I was always meant to be and I remain a minister in God's Church no matter where I go. I am the same here with you on a Sunday as I am with friends at the pub, I journey with you through your ups and downs in the same way that I journey with my friends and it is because God has provided me with the grace to be able to do so.

I stand at the precipice of great change about which I am both excited and frightened but I trust that the grace of God will uphold and uplift me. Every once in a while as preachers we are put in a place where we need to be recipients of our own good advice. This is one of those times. I hope that you have heard me say that while God never promised that it would be easy, but that God does provide angels to support and to guide us along the way. So thank you for being my angels.

As [swimmers](#) dare
to lie face to the sky
and [water](#)
bears them,
as hawks rest upon air
and air sustains them,
so would I learn to attain
freefall, and float
into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,
knowing no effort earns
that all-surrounding grace.

A poem by Denise Levertov
Amen.