

Monday Musing: Monday May 27th, 2024.
Exiled...



Years back when I worked on the petting farm, Norman told me how important it was to pay attention to everything the animals did. He said watch for the bullies, be they the calves, turkeys, roosters, goats or sheep. He said watch for those animals who are bullied and pushed out or excluded. While working cleaning the pens, the grounds around the farm, or feeding the animals, we'd often stop and sit to pay attention. It was serious business. I learned a lot. And I did see behaviours that surprised me.

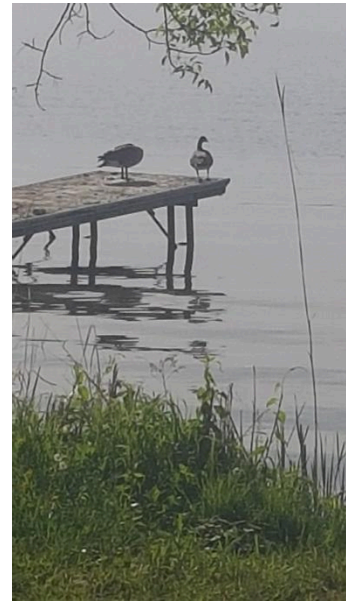
So last week, while away with the kids, I got up early one morning as I normally do. I went outside to watch the sun come up. A gaggle of geese came floating along the water. Their honking at each other to stay together, follow the leader and head to the dock was fascinating. And they all did go to the dock, and one by one climbed up and took up their positions where they had sat the previous day. I could tell because their previous day's 'left behinds' were all over the dock.

A few minutes later, another two geese came along the glistening water as the sun rose higher. They approached the dock where the others sat. That's when the real honking began. I watched one goose on the dock bellow at the oncoming two. And as they tried to get onto the dock, he (?) pushed them off. The others stood and 'guarded' the dock and joined in the honking. It was clear these other two were not wanted. They were sent away. I watched them go into exile over to the other dock. Yet I did not know why.

What disturbed me was the thought that we, as humans, do the same to each other. Some are welcome to travel with us, sit on our dock, be part of the in-crowd. Some are ignored, shunned, sent away in exile to another place, or to sit on the margins of where we are. Either way, animals or humans, it is so very sad.

I have a dear friend who spent her whole life as a kindergarten teacher. She once told me that in her kindergarten classes, she could already tell who would become or were the bullies and who would become or already were the bullied. What wasn't always evident was why. Why is that?

What makes someone so different that they become excluded, shunned, ignored or just treated unkindly? What makes another unkind and bullying? I don't know what it was about those two geese who were sent away or why the one dock might have been preferred space. But humans, unlike geese, have the ability to talk out our differences if we choose to take the time to do so and with compassion both listening and hearing too. Doing so prevents more serious conflicts and deeper hurts.



As we go through our days and our nights, let's do as Norman often said. Let's stop and pay attention. Look around. Who is sitting alone? Where? Why? And let's enter into that space and offer a gracious welcome. Let's remember God calls us into community but we have to take the steps ourselves to answer and to gather together. We're not a gaggle, but then, maybe we are! Let's listen to our words and our voices too!

Let us be honest, be kind, be love itself, reaching out to those who are on the other dock.

Peace always,
Rev. Deb Foster
Minister, St. Andrew's United Church, Markham
905-294-0351 minister@standrewsmarkham.com

Prayer

Holy God, you call us to come together,
To love one another, to live in harmony together,
Yet it is up to us to answer the call and to come into community.
May we be open to hearing your call.
May we be willing to answer the invitation.
May we be gracious welcoming all who gather with us
So that no one is left out, left behind, or exiled
From the treasure that is community.
Amen.

Scripture this Week

I Samuel 3:1-20	God calls to the boy Samuel.
Psalms 139	God knows us completely.
2 Corinthians 4:5-12	Paul preaches 'Jesus Christ as Lord.'
Mark 2:23-3:6	Responding to human need trumps obeying rules.

TR Question (Theological Reflection)

Paul preached 'Jesus Christ as Lord.' Since 1948, the World Council of Churches preach 'Lord Jesus Christ, God and Saviour.' What words do you use to describe the relationship of God and Christ? Do either of these phrases express the heart of your faith or would another phrase describe the heart of your faith better? How do you or should we relate to those who believe differently? Do they join our dock? Or are they exiled to the other dock?