

August 26, 2021 14th Sunday after Pentecost
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Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9 Psalm 15
Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Que la Gracia de Dios este con cada uno de ustedes, amados en Cristo Jesús. Amen.

God's timing is always perfect, Amen ?! Amen!

If Pastor Jen had told me about the opportunity to preach before going through the Clinical Pastoral Education experience, surely I would have been totally terrified, -- but the deep learning of these last two years in which some of my experiences have been; -- my first year of seminary, loved ones hospitalized and others dead because of covid, loved ones suffering family separation because of this broken immigration system, the murder of George Floyd and the nationwide protests, my husband's infidelity, separation, planning a divorce and my learning experience as an intern chaplain at a hospital and many other experiences reaffirmed my trust in the living Word of God and the power of love.

LOVE of God, love of neighbor, love of God's beautiful creation -- because it is this immense love of God that I have experienced through my community that has sustained me.

Lately the song "No longer Slaves" from Bethel Music, has been present in my heart and every time I listen to it and sing it, my whole being is filled with joy and courage, even in the most painful moments that I have experienced. The first verse says:

You unravel me	Me envuelves hoy con una canción
With a melody	Melodía de tu amor
You surround me with a song	Cantas libertad
Of deliverance	En mi adversidad
From my enemies	Hasta que huya el temor
'Til all my fears are gone	Ya no soy esclava del temor, Yo soy hija de Dios

I am no longer a slave of fear, I am a child of God.

The coronavirus pandemic has caused a collective fear but God promises us deliverance. When we hear from Deuteronomy chapter 4 verse1 *4:1 So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, (so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the*

LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. (2X)) Did you hear that? Turn to someone and tell them, or put your hand on your heart and tell yourself: SO THAT YOU MAY LIVE!

These!! are life-giving words! giving us instructions for our recovery, our freedom from this collective fear. We, We! are God's beloved, and just as we hear from verse 2 4:2 *You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God!!(2X) with which I am charging you.* Walking in faith, trusting in God's promises, Loving God, loving our neighbor; statutes and ordinances that represent the stepping stones to a life of abundance, peace, wholeness, harmony, and love.

Let us focus on LOVE, let us stand firm on God's commandments, and let no one and nothing move us away from that LOVE. Just as we hear from Psalm 15th *Those who do these things shall never be moved.* I know that throughout this pandemic so many of us have done our best to find safe ways to stay connected and take care of each other but there is still so much apathy, avarice, wickedness, deceit, pride, and folly growing and coming out of people's hearts!! and we all see it in plain sight!! when money becomes more important than saving lives. Let us hear from Mark's Gospel once more:

'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me;

7:7 in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.'

7:8 You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

7:14 Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand:

7:15 there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile."

7:21 For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder,

7:22 adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly.

7:23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

LOVE, God's commandments of LOVE are what will destroy all those evil intentions!! that come from the human heart!! and will give us the creativity we need to find new ways of loving and taking care of each other instead of letting fear separate us.

May God's love be what shines in your face the moment you open your eyes and may you have an abundance of love to give to God, to yourself, and to others so that we can make this love be known to our children and our children's children. Amen.

