

“Seasons: Journeying Through the Year”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden
for First UMC, Grand Junction, Sunday, July 19, 2020

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ
website: www.fumcgj.org/sermons-2/

Scripture Texts:

Eccl. 3:1-8, 11-13 [NLT];

Psalms 104:1-2, 5, 13, 19-20, 24, 33 [NLT]

OPENING –

From “Grandpa’s Story” [Beth Richardson, *Christ Beside Me, Christ Within Me* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2016)]
p. 46 down to “They’re pretty, but you can’t eat them.” 😊

(*“The rest of the story” at the end of the sermon.*)

SERMON THOUGHTS

I. The Heart of Celtic Spirituality: Spiritual Practices

[Source: U.S. Catholic. <https://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201905/12-celtic-spiritual-practices-celebrate-god-our-world-31727>]

Refresher from last week (“cumulative force” of the series):

- Three essential things
- Walking the rounds (*leads into *Peri-* below*)

Perigrinatio pro Christo

In the Celtic monastic tradition, **wandering** was a powerful practice inspired by the biblical story of Abraham.

Scripture meditation

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and I will make you exceedingly numerous.”

—Genesis 17:1–2

I also think of Genesis 12:1-3

The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.” [NLT]

There is a unique [Latin] term for this wandering: *peregrinatio pro Christo*, or *the call to wander for the love of Christ*.

It differs from pilgrimage (*which has a plan, a destination, a hoped-for result...*) and is a phrase without a precise English definition, hence the Latin.

The wandering saints set forth without destination, often getting into a small boat with no oars or rudder, called a coracle, and trusting themselves to the currents of divine love.





They surrendered themselves completely to the wind and ocean and let themselves be carried to what they called the place of their resurrection, the place where they would live and work, die and be buried, and where their remains would await their resurrection on the Last Day. (*Illustrate with the story of NOMADS: Nomads On a Mission Active in Divine Service and of Jim & Margie's life.*)

AND...

Seasonal cycles

The unfolding of the seasons was an overarching template for the Celtic imagination [– circular, but not monotonous, as Qoheleth concluded].

Scripture meditation

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die.

—Ecclesiastes 3:1–2a

In the pre-Christian tradition, there are significant feast days aligned with the equinoxes and solstices. And then there are the cross-quarter days, which are the midway points between them and part of the harvest cycle.

The Christian calendar incorporates many of these rhythms, with Christmas falling near the winter solstice, the feast of John the Baptist at the summer solstice, and Easter after the spring equinox. The monastic prayers of the Liturgy of the Hours also respect these sacred rhythms of nature's rise and fall, birth and death.

TO THE SCRIPTURES

Eccl. 3:1-8, *plus* the following (vv. 11-13):

...God has made everything beautiful for its own time.

He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.¹² So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can.

¹³ *And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God.*

And the following vv. from Psalm 104

¹ *Let all that I am praise the Lord.*

*O Lord my God, how great you are!
You are robed with honor and majesty.*

^{2a} *You are dressed in a robe of light.*

⁵ *You placed the world on its foundation
so it would never be moved.*

¹³ *You send rain on the mountains from your
heavenly home, and you fill the earth with the
fruit of your labor.*

¹⁹ *You made the moon to mark the seasons,
and the sun knows when to set.*

²⁰ *You send the darkness, and it becomes night,
when all the forest animals prowl about.*

²⁴ *O Lord, what a variety of things you have made!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your creatures.*

³³ *I will sing to the Lord as long as I live.
I will praise my God to my last breath!*

II. Beth Richardson and *Christ Beside Me, Christ Within Me*

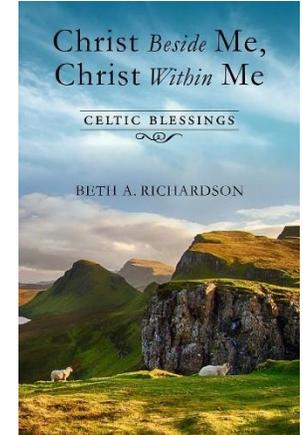
Ideas around Beth's

"Bless to me ____" prayers

→ The list for this segment:

Seasons. There are "Bless to me ____" prayers for

- ✓ The New Year
- ✓ The Eve of Ash Weds (what is also called *Mardi Gras!*)
- ✓ Welcome, Spring
- ✓ Good Friday
- ✓ Easter
- ✓ Memorial Day
- ✓ Harvest
- ✓ All Saints Day
- ✓ For the Long Nights
- ✓ For the Light
- ✓ Christmas



Memorial Day

Leave flowers at grave sites,
On street corners, and at memorials.
Leave candles and letters,
Bundles of sage
or crosses made of twigs

Let all know
That they are not forgotten,
That their lives,
No matter how short or long,
Made a difference.

That their names,
Famous or unknown,
Will never die.

Their presence in this world
Changed it, touched it,
Marked it in a unique way.

Each one.
Every one.
Remembered.

In love,
In respect,
In gratitude.

Harvest

With grateful thanks
We receive the bounty of this earth.

Giver of plenty,
You are the source of
Plants and meat,
Milk and herbs,
Clean water and safe homes.

Bless this harvest,
Its beautiful colors.
Bless this bounty,
Its nourishing substance.

Bless the livestock
And those who keep them.
Bless the farmers, the workers,
The gleaners, far and near.

Bless the hungry,
Those who have no homes,

Those displaced by drought or violence.
Give succor to the people in their need.

Bless this world and all its creatures.
All that we are,
All that we have,
Are gifts of your creation.

CONCLUSION

In daily life: *Perigrinatio pro Christo*

Each evening, reflect on the...day [just ended] and notice the signs of the divine presence.

- Where have you felt nudges to move forward?
- How have you been invited to surrender into trust?
- Where have you turned away from these?
- In what ways did you resist or ignore the holy impulses?

In daily life: Seasonal cycles

Make time for contemplative walks outside in your neighborhood. Instead of trying to get somewhere specific, simply pay attention to the world around you and how God might be speaking to you. Pay particular attention to the signs of the season—what flowers might be in bloom, whether the trees have their leaves, and the height of the sun in the sky. Ask yourself what season your own soul is in right now.

(*“The rest of the story” re: Grandpa, pp. 46-47*)