



Where's Christ?
Matthew 11:2-11

Third Sunday of Advent ~ Sunday, December 15th, 2019
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois
The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel, Jr.

Text: Jesus answered them (ie. the disciples of John the Baptist), "Go and tell John what you hear and see. (v. 4)

"Where's Waldo?"

The Where's Waldo books have entertained my children and grandchildren since they came on the scene in 1987. Waldo is that geeky looking man with the black rimmed glasses, red and white long sleeved turtleneck sweater, and bobble hat who finds himself hidden in plain site in a variety of settings. Created by the English illustrator Martin Hanford he is known as "Wally" in his native England. We have large picture books of Waldo's adventures that are literally falling apart because of use. John the Baptist's question in today's gospel lesson reminded me of the "Where's Waldo" books.

John, whom we call the Baptist, is in prison. In a matter of weeks or months he will be executed. In gospel he sees is the forerunner of the "messiah" or "coming one". The "coming one" or messiah was to be a person who would, in the words of one commentator, deliver "fiery judgement". He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:12)

When Jesus presented himself to John for baptism, John hesitated. I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (3:13) But rather than being the "fiery judge", Jesus was a healer. As far as we know, no one in first-century Judaism looked for a messiah who would be a healer. Yet that is exactly what Jesus was. Jesus taught the multitudes in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, but the "poor in spirit", those who mourn, and the peacemakers. He reached out to the untouchables, the lepers, opened the eyes of the blind, was touched by the unclean, ate with sinners, walked among the dispossessed, and confronted the nay-sayers. In other words, if Jesus was the messiah, he hadn't read the job description because he was definitely nothing like what they expected. And that is why John sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was, in fact, "the one", the messiah.

Here's something to remember about God. God is a God of surprises. God will nearly always do what you least expect. It's as if God enjoys jumping out of burning bushes and yelling to Creation, "Surprise!" Maybe that is why when Moses asked God what the Divine's name was, the only response he got was nothing less than theological gibberish; "I am what I am, I will be what I will be, tell the people 'I Am' sent me." (Exodus 3: 13ff)

When John's disciples came to Jesus asking if he was indeed "the coming one", the messiah, do you remember what he said? Go back and tell John what's going on: The blind see, The lame walk, Lepers are cleansed, The deaf hear, The dead are raised, the wretched of the earth learn that God is on their side. (The Message, v,6)

The thing about Waldo is that he can be found in plain sight, there in the midst of chaos. Christ is right here in plain sight if only we look in the chaos of our lives.

God's movement in this world is like a deep current. And those who decide to take Jesus seriously are invited to enter into the current's path. But one must be careful for there are undertows in which we can lose ourselves. Losing oneself in riding God's current is what the apostle Paul was talking about when he wrote in Romans, It is no longer I that lives but Christ lives in me.

So where is Christ? Christ is wherever there the least, the last, and the lost are found. Christ is where the hungry are fed, the homeless are sheltered, the spiritually blind are given insight, the sick, the dying, and the literally blind are cared for, where the lost are found, where the hopeless are given hope. Christ is in the midst of the world's brokenness and Christ beckons us to be His Body, to be the Church, doing works of the Kingdom in His name and to the glory of God.

Amen.