

Pride and prejudice

Pentecost 6C—June 26, 2016

[This transcript was meant for a spoken performance. It is not optimized for a reading experience.]

When his disciples James and John saw that the Samaritans did not welcome Jesus, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But he turned and rebuked the disciples. Then they went on to another village.

Will you pray with me? I am stuck God, help. Amen! May this be so!

[Play video "[Broken wings](#)" by Anastacia]

Now for something totally different: today's sermon, in a roundabout way, connects with the gospel that you just heard. The storyteller we call Luke is creating a story, a story about Jesus. The scene is set. Jesus and his followers are on their way to Jerusalem. Understand what that means. Jesus has set his face to Jerusalem. Jesus is facing what he must have known was going to happen. You know what happens. Jesus faces death, his own death, his own mortality and his own limitations.

The group is amongst the "others," meaning the Samaritans. They are the other because within first-century Judaism they are considered the deviants, the impure.

I didn't choose today's gospel; it is the actual reading for today in the cycle of readings. What leaped out for me was the followers'—those disciples'—response when the Samaritans did not show the group hospitality.

In the ancient near East, hospitality was expected. In this story today, there is no hospitality given. There is no water to cleanse with; there is no drink; there is no morsel of food ... there is no welcome.

Today's gospel, in a way, echoes the gospel from two weeks ago where the woman with the reputation responds in extraordinary ways of welcome.

The disciples are angry. I understand their anger. *"Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"* Have you ever felt that level of anger that you wanted to smite someone? I have.

Let this be the base of today's ramblings called a sermon.

I want to expose my scars that have been hidden in the dark.

Two weeks ago we all heard what happened at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando.

Let me share with you my pages, often written late at night when I could not sleep.

12 June at 11:34 pm

Tell me what do you pray for?

Do you pray for me?

Do you pray for the others?

All the others?

The Ls? The Gs? The Bs? The T? The Qs? The 2S?

Your f*ing prayers are not being heard.

49 of my people are dead. That number will grow.

Dead because your God that you pray to is the same f*ing God that tells you I am less than. Oh and that your God is pissed off at me and my people because everything that goes wrong is because of this tribe.

At least that is the bullcrap we keep hearing from you.

Doesn't matter Islam or Christian you threaten me and my people over and over and over again. Then others join in the action and believe the lies.

Do not tell me your church or your faith is different.

There are many clergy who are simply batcrap crazy and spew hate in the name of your God.

Pope Francis ... quit telling the world about your care and concern for what happened in Orlando.

Stop your praying and open the doors and welcome my tribe openly and completely. To not be healing is to harm; there is no neutrality as a church.

Oh there are just too many leaders to name.

Stop your praying ... NO ONE is listening ... get off your knees and be what you are praying about.

SHUT UP and fix this problem now.

These LGBTQ2S were murdered because of the hate stewed within Christianity and Islam. Our blood is on your hands.

So stop your praying ... get off your knees...

Send a message, sit with someone of my tribe.

Ask us for forgiveness if you are Christian, a Jew, A Muslim. Your institution in all of its forms has hurt us, time and time again.

I am just so bloody f*ing angry.

I am angry.

I am hurt.

Clergy have the audacity to stand before your congregations and apologize for what your faith has done that hurt or killed my people

13 June at 5:03 pm

There is quiet in this bustling city. Look closely and you can see what happened in our eyes. Sadness and ache trickle their way to the surface.

The man on the street corner is shouting about “the love of Jesus Christ”.

Shall I go and stand before him?

Shall I stare and shout LOOK DEEP?

Not this time I simply look away. I take refuge.

I put on some music and simply sit. Maybe if I sit long enough the moans and gasps will explode and that which only trickled will pour out and I will cry. Cry for every one of the queer community. 49 yesterday, countless others, this day and that day. Shot ... hung ... tossed and strung.

49 dead, 53 severely wounded.

Maybe if I sit here long enough I will feel the blood coursing in my veins and I will rise up.

I will rise up and fight back.

I will remember that I am a warrior of a large and powerful tribe called Queer.

I will not be silenced.

I will not swallow fear.

Horror will not entrap me.

But for now I can only sit on my mat and remember to cry.

[Nicole reads Alex Darke's Facebook post:]

13 June at 7:54 pm

Earlier today, a friend remarked: "I don't understand. The way you are reacting, it's almost like you knew someone in the club."

Here's the thing you need to understand about every LGBT person in your family, your work, and your circle of friends:

We've spent most of our lives being aware that we are at risk.

When you hear interviewers talking to LGBT folks and they say, "It could have been here. It could have been me," they aren't exaggerating. I don't care how long you've been out, how far down your road to self-acceptance and love you've travelled, we are always aware that we are at some level of risk.

*I'm about as "don't give a sh*t what ANYONE thinks" as anyone you'll ever meet ... and when I reach to hold Matt's hand in the car? I still do the mental calculation of "OK, that car is just slightly behind us so they can't see, but that truck to my left can see right inside the car". If I kiss Matt in public, like he leaned in for on the bike trail the other day, I'm never fully in the moment. I'm always parsing who is around us and paying attention to us. There's a tension that comes with that ... a literal tensing of the muscles as you brace for potential danger. For a lot of us, it's become such an automatic reaction that we don't even think about it directly anymore. We just do it.*

And then ... over the last few years, it started to fade a little. It started to feel like maybe things were getting better. A string of Supreme Court decisions. Public opinion shifting to the side of LGBT rights. Life was getting better. You could breathe a little bit.

What happened with this event is pretty dramatically demonstrated by how Matt and I are reacting to it. Matt came out fairly late, during the golden glow of the changing tide. He's never dealt with something like this. It's literally turned him inside out emotionally because all that stuff he read about that was just "then" became very much "NOW". For me, I've had some time to adjust to the idea that people hate us enough to kill us. Matthew Shepard was my first real lesson in that. So this weekend was a sudden slap in the face, a reminder that I should never have let my guard down, should never have gotten complacent ... because it could have been US.

*Every LGBT person you know knows what I'm talking about. Those tiny little mental calculations we do over the course of our life add up ... and we just got hit with a stark reminder that those simmering concerns, those fears ... they probably won't ever go away. We'll never be free of them. Additionally, now we just got a lesson that expressing our love could result in the deaths of *others* completely unrelated to us. It's easy to take risks when it's just you and you've made that choice. Now there's this subtext that you could set off someone who kills other people who weren't even involved. And that's just a lot.*

That's why I'm personally a bit off balance even though (or because, depending on how you look at it) I live in Texas and was not personally affected by this tragedy. Don't get me wrong: nothing will change. I will still hold my husband's hand in public. I will still kiss him in public. We'll still go out and attend functions and hold our heads high.

But we will be making those mental calculations for the rest of our lives. Those little PDAs you take for granted with your spouse. They come with huge baggage for us. Every single one is an act of defiance, with all that entails.

So do me a favour. Reach out to that LGBT person in your life. Friend, co-worker, or family. Just let them know you are thinking of them and you love them. That will mean the world to them right now. I promise you.

Alex Darke

14 June at 6:26 pm

Sitting with Nicole today, I said I was thinking of painting the stairs to the church in rainbow colours and writing the names of those killed. Never leave us alone ... We are making a rainbow out of yards of fabric that I just happened to have. I was brave and or foolish enough to climb a ladder to start. It is quite high up. Tomorrow, we will start adding teardrops with the names of those who died on Sunday morning in Orlando. We have decided to add 50. We will include the murderer. As much as I want to leave him off, I must lean into the idea that love is stronger than hate.

What was amazing is that, even as we were putting it up, neighbours yelled out, "That looks great" or they came over to talk and shared the impact of the massacre.

16 June at 2:40 am

Tonight I decided I needed to go to Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto for a service of prayer, kind of weird that I wanted, needed to go.

It is a church that holds a lot my memories. I pointed out to a friend that the pew over there was where my lover and I sat. Sweet, sad memories. Michael died from AIDS.

MCCT was where I could mourn, cry, be confused and be angry.

So tonight I needed to sit and be present and mourn, be angry and be p*ssed at everything.

I needed to sit and be confused.

I needed to sit and be angry and I wanted to rise and yell. I wanted to yell 50! 50 people died. Omar Mateen was one of the 50.

I am angry at Omar. I am angry at all the Omars, and Sams, Jessies and Joes who call us "other", lesser and disposable.

I am angry at fathers who teach hate to their sons and daughters and mothers who don't step in to care.

I am angry, at churches, mosques and temples.

Anger stirred in my chest and I wanted to rise up and yell out loud, "50! 50, there were fifty."

I don't understand why this happened but if I am asked to pray ... there are 50! I pray for 50.

"Love is stronger than hate" and right now I need to hang on to that because I am angry. I am so f*ing angry ... because I need to forgive and I can't forgive because I am angry.

Anger right now tastes sweeter than love.

I will sit with my anger.

There were 50! 50 died on a hot salsa night.

50 human beings died that Sunday morning. To say anything less names one "the other" and we turn the circle of prejudice around and around.

Thursday, June 23

I am still angry. What happened in Orlando happened to me. What happened in Orlando happened to you. To use a now far too familiar phrase: “We are Orlando.” We are interconnected. As much and as horrible as one can be to another, to preach to teach annihilation can knock one for a loop.

In today’s gospel, the followers wanted to annihilate, wanted to kill the other, the Samaritans. I understand the disciples. I get it.

When I sit with the gospel and the anger that is so very attractive right now, something emerges from the story.

Jesus turns to his followers and says no. No to annihilation, no to your anger that destroys.

I have cried many tears over the past two weeks. I have played a lot of music, over and over and over again. As I have turned and read these pages to you, the words of the song I played begin to lift my spirit. I know that song, I know that experience.

Even with broken wings, even with shattered dreams I am still going to try, I am still going to fly.

As “the smoke starts to clear, yes I have wanted to give up, but not now, not here”. “Even with broken wings I am still going to fly. I have found the strength I never knew I had in me with my broken wings.”

In today’s gospel, Jesus is facing his death. He doesn’t retreat. He doesn’t hide. He keeps moving forward. He keeps moving forward.

Maybe that is what the storyteller is trying to tell his or her community: keep moving forward.

Jesus says, “Follow me.” Follow me. You have started a journey. Keep moving forward. People aren’t going to like you. Keep moving forward. Some will want to kill you. Keep moving forward.

Keep moving forward. Don’t look back. Don’t look back. Move forward.

Jesus knew what it was to have broken wings. The followers knew the shattered dreams. Even when Jesus was murdered, the followers found *“the strength they never knew they had even with their broken wings”*.

Even with broken wings, the gospel speaks right here, right now. Jesus says “follow” because this is good news indeed.