

Proper 15 Year C

August 14, 2022 Trinity Church Boston

Isaiah 5:1-7

Luke 12:49-56

Collect:

Almighty God, you have given your only Son to be for us a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life: Give us grace to receive thankfully the fruits of his redeeming work, and to follow daily in the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Lord, transform us – not for our benefit, but for the benefit of the world.

Do your work in us –

molding us,

making us,

shaping us,

changing us,

To be the new creation you have called us to be in Jesus Christ. ⁱ

In the past month, my husband Rob and I have had our lives transformed. Arriving in the commonwealth of Massachusetts, we have learned how to drive in a rotary, how to successfully survive the RMV (with new license plates and driver's licenses!), and I am still learning which door leads where here at Trinity Church Boston. A beautiful new space.

One thing that has not changed for us is the heat.
Please do not blame these transplants from Florida for the weather conditions of the past month. We are used to the heat but the heat with centralized air conditioning!
Ya'll. It has been HOT!

And I don't know about you, but the heat makes folks cranky.
It's a real thing.

As Rob and I have settled in we have found salvation in both Jesus and box fans.

Oh that cool breeze in the evening.

AND, we have sought out sanctuary in cool spaces...museums and the movie theaters.

On one of those hottest of hot days a couple of weeks ago we escaped to the divinely cool dark space to watch Top Gun: Maverick in the movie theater and movie did not disappoint.

Growing up in the 80's in West Berlin, in the midst of the Cold War, Top Gun was a movie that we watched often. For some reason it might have been the only video cassette we owned. The planes, the music, the short quips. The self-assured youthful Tom Cruise, the tragedy of death, and the threat of "the enemy." We were hooked.

I was intrigued to see how this sequel some 25 plus years later would measure up with my memories. For those who have not seen the most recent movie, spoiler alert, there are a lot of airplanes, A lot of cockpit shots, and decisions that make a difference between life and death.

The storyline struggles with the dilemma of being a rogue hotshot maverick and a team player. Decisions regarding watching out for your family and team and the weight of each decision.

Tom Cruise, as maverick, is still flying planes and his relationship with Val Kilmer, Iceman, has shifted from rivalry to a deep friendship and mentor.

There is a moment in the movie where Tom Cruise and Val Kilmer are talking about the guilt that Tom Cruise's character has carried with him all of his career and Val Kilmer says sagely, "It is time to let go" the words hang there in silence.

Tom Cruise finally replies, "I don't know how to do that."

A rogue maverick who professes that he doesn't know how to do that radical maneuver of transformation.

In the midst of the comfort of the air conditioning and recliners, my mind finally let go of the discomfort of the heat and wandered from Maverick to the deep truth of this statement.

What is it time to let go of?
Do we know how to let go?
Are we EVEN willing to admit that we do not even know how to let go?

In today's gospel, I imagine it might have been a little bit hot outside.
We are half way through Luke's Gospel, Jesus has settled into his walking
and preaching and teaching phase and he is just getting warmed up.

Jesus is challenging the disciples and all those listening to be transformed,
to not only listen but to let their lives be challenged by the teachings.

Listening to the words of Jesus should indeed challenge us, transform us,
EVEN put us at odds with our family.

Now, some of us may be quite used to being at odds with our family
members.

We were born to stir things up, press all the buttons of our loved ones.
All of our lives, we have spoken the hard truth.

AND, Some of us might flee from confrontation like my friend does when
he sees a spider, he can move faster than the speed of light.

Today, Jesus has gone from preaching to, as they say in the south,
Meddling.

How then do we let go of the things that bind us from living our lives fully?

How do let go of the fear of judgement and criticism that stops us in our tracks?

How do we let go of the grief that paralyzes us, hinders our being transformed rather than living in anguish?

How then, Jesus shall we do this?

We don't always know how.

Jesus, with infinite patience, with infinite compassion, with infinite joy says to each of us, "Follow me, pray with me, watch me, do like me... one step at a time."

Jesus says,

I am here with you.

I love you.

You are needed just as you are.

You belong here

You are called to do more

Be More

DO More

Right where you are in the midst of the heat or the cool of the evening breeze.

Jesus' words today remind us that we can be so smart and savy in so many ways. We can predict the weather, we can see the signs.

To this Jesus asks, Why can't you see the signs that I am here in your midst?

Why do you let the world tell you otherwise?

Have no fear.

This will cause tension in the world, in your family, in your comfort zone.

Speaking truth in love is disruptive.

But lean in.....

Here is some reassuring news,

Others have lived through times like these before us.

We are indeed surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who have endured.

To create this historic space, the leadership of Trinity Church had to lean in, there was much division (oh I can only imagine those building committee meetings!!) and yet this amazing structure is testament to the birth of something new founded on the same truth, a desire for the world to be transformed by the Word of God.

Phillips Brooks, Nicolas LeFarge, Shipley—names that were new, leaning in together to create something new and at the same upon the same desire

as those who established Trinity in 1733...that all may be welcomed into the loving embrace of God.

Church architecture is an amazing thing. In the space where the transepts meet the center aisle the roof line comes to a point...it is both the weakest and the strongest point of the space.

While here at Trinity we have the beautiful Richardson Romanesque architectural style with arches and domes, other churches do not have the domes like Trinity. Regardless of domes and arches, in this crossing space, all of the weight of the roof falls upon this space. The roof could collapse if it were not for the fact that it leans upon the opposing side (or in our case, supported by the arch and dome). By leaning inthe force is redirected, what was once weakness and most vulnerable becomes its strongest and most stable point.

In the church, we gather in this space for baptisms, for weddings, for funerals.

It is where we are most vulnerable
and in our vulnerability we lean in and upon each other for strength.

Jesus is inviting his disciples to lean into him, into his teaching, his love, his being. In their angst and fear and division, his friends are invited to lean

into the peace that comes ---not through easy living but deep living through a life transformed by love.

God's love is countercultural,
god's love will cause division and discomfort....
If we lean in, though,
if we lean forward with love instead of running from that division,
I do believe we can continue and be strengthened together.

Leaning in requires patience and prayer, deep listening and grace.
Leaning in requires us to be willing to hold each other's stories, honoring them, and be transformed.
To let go of Fear, of anxiety, to breathe in
and listen to each other's hopes and pain and together see the face of God more fully.

The theologian, Henri Nouwen, says this, "As we keep our eyes directed at the One who says, "Do not be afraid," we may slowly let go of our fear. We will learn to live in a world without zealously defended borders. We will be free to see the suffering of other people, free to respond not with defensiveness, but with compassion, with peace, with ourselves."

God loves us just where we are and calls us in to continue to inquire, wrestle and grow in love and grace.

How will you lean into this love this week?

Gracious God, do your work in our world –
Give to us a vision of transformed lives,
neighborhoods, and communities and how we can partner with you
to see what can happen when people of faith make an eternal
difference –
living and loving and giving ourselves fully –heart, mind, and
strength –
to be the very presence of your love in our world. Amen!ⁱⁱ

ⁱ <https://www.faithward.org/prayer-for-transformation/>

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