

Each of our Scriptures this day, are questions of AUTHORITY.

Increasingly our world has become divided, not only by politics, by religion, by haves and have nots, by Conservatives and Liberals. We are divided by which AUTHORITIES we trust to listen to.

For years my family listened to Huntley and Brinkley, then Walter Cronkite. Today, it might be divisive to say which version of the News, we listen to, which version of the TRUTH, but my sons listen to Pod casts and Late Night Comedians for their version of the News.

Our Call to Worship this morning began with naming that when Jesus was in Nazareth, the Sacred land of our Church, the lands of our homes, were Native Tribal Lands of the **Hohokam and Tohono O'dham**. I find that heritage beautiful, not as a matter for reparations so much as to honor and respect the identity. Then again in the community where we lived for over 20 years, your home was not identified by the current owners, by your name, until someone else had bought it, today we share Ruth Morris' home.

The subtle context, in our Call to Worship was naming that before the first peoples were in this land, GOD heard the cries of those abused, and GOD the Creator had such compassion as to enter in to Free them. AND throughout human history, believers Cared that GOD cared about us. Part of the question before us is: DO believers trust that the Church still speaks with AUTHORITY?

The First Five books of the Bible, variously called The Pentateuch, or the Torah meaning Books of Law, establish that foundation of relationship. We trust GOD to have been before all things. That same Immortal, Invisible GOD, then became Savior of the enslaved. The Power of GOD, the primordial, untamed power was frightening to people, so GOD spoke through MOSES as Prophet, and promised to always provide leaders like Moses sent from GOD. BEFORE WE GO ANYWHERE ELSE THERE IS RECOGNITION OF THE TRINITY EVEN THROUGH THE FIRST BOOKS OF THE BIBLE. Yet here, looking from a time with Moses to the future, there is concern whether we can trust the authority of future PROPHETS. And the Word of God that comes through Moses is that if the Prophet speaks the word of God it will come true. If the Prophet or any leader speaks falsely, they shall die.

In school we were taught that authority was based on reason and logic, founded on the Constitution and Laws, but AUTHORITY was not always based on Logic and Reason. Before Plato and Aristotle, AUTHORITY was based on being able to quote more authorities in quantity than anyone else.

When we had Christian friends from Africa who came to live in the United States, they were appalled at American Christmas traditions, asking "Where in the Bible is it written about Santa Claus?" "When did you begin decorating trees?" "There is no snow in the Middle East, what is this about a White Christmas?"

The same could be said for the Kirk'n O The Tartans. This is a decidedly American tradition, developed by Presbyterian Pastor Peter Marshall during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. But the thing about Traditions, is that once begun, they are difficult to stop.

A Tartan is a woven fabric with a simple 2 over 2 twill with strips going both across the Warp and down the Weft, found in the earliest of artifacts from the Highlands of Scotland, yet also found in Bronze Age scraps in Scandinavia and even the fabric of mummies from China's Xinjiang province. Rather than the vibrant colors of some of our banners, the earliest Threads for Tartans were dyed with local plants. By the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, professional Weavers went from town to town with local customers providing their own home dyed yarn for the Weavers to fashion. Using local indigenous yarns is probably the origin to Clan or regional Tartans.

Americans tend to lump all of the Reformations in together, however in 1517 Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the Doors of the Church at Wittenberg, Germany. In 1536 John Calvin published The Institutes of the Christian Religion at Geneva, Switzerland, which became the theological foundation of the

Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church. While in 1534 King Henry VIII Renounced Catholic Church, creating the Church of England. These were 3 separate Reformations, in differing Nations, questioning what do we believe, what is authoritative about GOD if we are no longer part of the Orthodox Church.

150 years after Henry VIII, the British Parliament deposed Catholic King James II. The Supporters of James, seeking to reinstate him, and later his grandson called Bonnie Prince Charlie, were called Jacobites. The Catholic Tartan wearing Scots of the Highlands, Jacobites, sought to overthrow the Parliament. Between 1715 and 1745 their efforts led to Parliamentary Acts of PROSCRIPTION intended to undermine the Highlanders' military Authority. In 1745 it became illegal for men and boys to wear Tartans in Scotland north of Perth. Yet, British Army Highlanders, Veterans and Landed Gentry could still wear their Tartans.

A favorite story of Scottish Lore is of Jenny Geddes sometimes called Jenny Goodwife. To appreciate the story, you need to know that in those days there were not Pews as we are accustomed, instead each worshipper brought their own chair or milkstool. In 1633 when Charles I was to be inaugurated King, he commissioned "A Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments for the use of the Church of Scotland", which was decidedly Anglican in style and wording. The first use of the Book of Prayer was at St. Giles Cathedral on the 23 of July 1637, When the Dean of Edinburgh James Hannay began to read the Collect at the start of Worship as prescribed in the Book, Jenny was so offended by this intrusion, she took up her milkstool and threw it at the Preacher in the pulpit! This led to widespread rioting in the streets, unresolved until February 1638 When the National Covenant was signed, defying any attempt to introduce innovations like an Anglican Prayer Book without first scrutiny by the Scottish Parliament and the general Assembly of the Church. In November of 1638 all Bishops and Archbishops were expelled from the Church of Scotland, adopting the Presbyterian governance. To this day, Presbyterians are known for not having A Book of Prayer, Bishops or ArchBishops. Thankfully, we are not remembered for throwing things at the Preacher in the Pulpit.

Returning to our Scripture, according to Mark, Jesus spoke with such authority, that all the people were in awe, comparing him to the Scribes and Pharisees who demonstrated no commitment of faith in their teaching, AND EVEN the demons recognized him. The same African friends mentioned earlier believed that whenever we are praying for healing, we need to recognize beneath the surface is a battle between Good and Evil. The intriguing part of the Gospel of Mark is that this the shortest of the Gospels has more stories of HEALING than any of the others, 18 different stories of Jesus having Compassion and Healing. Of those 18 different Healing stories, 13 are also stories of Exorcisms. The Presbyterians are not known for our exorcisms, we are often called THE FROZEN CHOSEN.

In one congregation, we came to recognize that the entire history of that church had been one of struggle, beneath all of the grand stories the church told about themselves, there had been abuse and conflict. One afternoon, as we approached Ash Wednesday, I invited a friend to come over, who was a Presbyterian Pastor as well as being Native American. On a Cedar Board we burned Sage and Palm Branches as a kind of burnt offering, all the while praying that the aura of the Church would be lifted. There in the rafters were all the memories of Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals, which had not been fulfilled, all of the broken promises and pain waiting to be released, forgiven. What occurs to me is that beneath each of these Scriptures about AUTHORITY, what is actually demonstrated is COMPASSION. When God had met the Hebrews on Mount Horeb, they were filled with Fear and Anxiety, so GOD appointed Moses to act as Go Between, protecting them. GOD has continually provided PROPHETS for us, if we will but listen. AND our Lord and Savior, when preaching at Capernaum listened to the pain of a man possessed and had compassion.