

Meditation for Eternity/Memorial Sunday  
[written in oral form]

2 Samuel 23:17: John 18:33-37  
Reign of Christ Sunday, Year B

November 25, 2018  
Gordon Allaby

Like it or not, we are on trial.....most everyday....maybe all the time.

Some of us judge ourselves rather harshly. We see only our mistakes and short comings.

Some lack self reflection, yet put others on trial with their critical observations. Perhaps, they should be given a mirror.

Even so, we all make assumptions; we tend to group and stereotype. We form conclusions, and too often they are one sided and ill-conceived.

When we judge, including ourselves, it is hard to see the whole picture / to see both sides.

~~~~~

In 1967, Joni Mitchell formed these broken hearted words:

Bows and flows of angel hair and ice cream castles in the air,  
and feather canyons everywhere, I've looked at clouds that way.  
But, now they only block the sun, they rain and snow on everyone.  
So many things I would have done, but clouds got in my way.

I've looked at clouds from both sides now, from up and down,  
And still somehow it's clouds illusions I recall;  
I really don't know clouds at all.

The John reading presents Jesus on trial.

The trial and crucifixion of Jesus must have felt like betrayal and extreme disappointment,.....for many of the spectators and admirers of Christ.

Jesus had presented a message of hope and empowerment for the underclass and the outcasts.

They enjoyed the stories of the miracles, and dreamed of more miracles.

The flashy side of Jesus got a lot of attention; the suffering side wasn't so appealing. Many of his admirers wanted Jesus to be their vision for a king. Many of the followers of Jesus were in shock and grief over their fallen leader.

~~~~~

It is not easy dealing with loss.

It is not easy having our illusions popped.

Nevertheless, Pilate's interrogation of Jesus offers us some much needed insight. The courtroom conversation gives us a view of ...Both Sides. Jesus was a great teacher, a miracle worker and healer, and... he was more, including being a humble servant and a connection from God.

~~~~~

Pilate is in character as a powerful political leader, and he asks Jesus if he is a political King?

Jesus wants to converse with all of Pilate, not just the status side, and responds with a probing personal question to Pilate.

Pilate stumbles, but regains composure and presses on in the manner of a good Roman leader – the role he strives to present.

Yet, Pilate softens his approach, instead of demanding a response to the charges against him, he asks, “What have you done?”

Surprisingly, Jesus gives a defence by seemingly answering the charges against him.

In addition, Jesus gives the big picture– Jesus’ Kingdom / domain is not from this world. His followers are not like soldiers who fight for a leader. Jesus is the whole story. Jesus is both sides NOW.

He is in the present and the beyond ..... all at once.

~~~~~

Pilate is baffled, and returns to asking Jesus if he really is a King.

At that point, Pilate’s head was likely spinning, and Jesus pushed him to reach for the truth–to go beyond the spin and illusion and grab the truth.

~~~~~

Verse 38 is Pilate’s response, “What is truth?”

>> What is truth?

John’s version of this trial is well crafted, and thought provoking.

Mark’s account has Jesus only saying THREE insignificant Words.

What is the whole story? What is truth?

~~~~~

We like to think in terms of either / or.... yes or no.... up or down, but maybe truth is beyond that.

Maybe truth is all of the above.

Maybe truth is Both Sides Now.

Maybe truth is in the question?

Maybe truth is in the mystery.

Maybe truth is dynamic and changing?

~~~~~

But,..... HOW can that abstract thinking bring hope and comfort when we are alone in the darkness, waiting for a loved one to return.

What do we hold on to when we are searching for solid ground?

How are we to deal with grief when up is also down?

We want answers.....

We want the doctor to give us absolutes. We want answers!..... or do we? ????????

That is where Pilate stumbled.

~~~~~

How can we **fully** grieve a loved one if we cannot be honest?

~~~~~

Can we not Both honour the good in someone.... and be saddened by the ugly side.... as we grieve?

Can we..... NO....wait.... we MUST be honest.  
If the truth mandates it, then grief can contain anger, sadness, disappointment and joy... all wrapped up together.

For our own health we need to accept and embrace... Both sides / all sides. ~~~~~ The entire picture – the complete person,.... including ourselves.

~~~~~  
Back to Joni Mitchell:

Dreams and schemes and circus crowds,  
I've looked at life that way.  
But now old friends are acting strange,  
They shake their heads,  
They say I've changed,  
But something's lost  
But Something's gained,  
In living every day.  
I've looked at life from both sides now,  
From win and lose and still somehow  
It's life's illusions I recall,  
I really don't know life at all.

~~~~~

People..... Life is Part mystery.... because Life is about relationships!  
And, wholesome and healing relationships include LOVE....and love is a mystery. It's a mystery because it opens the heart and makes us humble. Love is a mystery from God.

Pilate stumbled over this.  
He was left holding a question.  
The truth was before him, and Pilate missed it because he wanted answers.  
He missed Jesus because he wanted answers.  
Pilate wanted to pigeon hole Jesus.  
Pilate sought to define and confine Jesus.

~~~~~

That exchange began the age old "Quest for Jesus"--who was he?

Was Jesus a King, a teacher, a saviour, a miracle worker, or... a humble defeated man before Pilate?

~~~~~

As we consider those options, ...let us consider who we are--all of our sides.

Let us consider the people we love / those we miss,.... and even those hard to love.  
Moreover, may we embrace our losses.....as we live with hope.

The world possess sunrises and sunsets at the same time.  
And, soon candles will be lit,.....and extinguished.

~~~~~

Before, we light candles, let us pause in prayer.

Gracious God,

In the mystery of life and death, help us to find peace in both sides.

Help us to know ourselves, as you know us.

We are complicated. We've made mistakes, and are humbled that you love us anyway.

May we realize that brokenness is a strength.

May we hold onto that unfolding truth.....as we remember and as we hope.

In Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, we pray. Amen

~~~~~

Carmen will come forward to light four candles for our church.

After that, as we sing, all are invited to come to the front to light a candle in memory of a loved one.