

Revising

*A homily preached by Jennifer A. Hudson at the Celtic Eucharist, St. Paul's Episcopal Church on the Green, February 16, 2017*

Psalm 1:1-6; Matthew 13:1-9

In the name of the God who re-creates, redeems, and sanctifies us. Amen.

When I began drafting a full-length novel for my MFA, my advisor reminded me that writing was a recursive process. Expecting perfection from a first draft not only stifled creativity, but also the integrity of the story. The perfectionist in me must have driven her crazy!

I found that writing several chapters of a sustainable and honest story was a long, difficult, and dirty process. The good stuff didn't come easily. A lot of junk had to be scrawled in order to find the right piece of dialogue or description, and sections or characters that didn't serve the story had to be sifted through and tossed. Even post-graduation, having realized my subplot was really my plot all along, I'm still revising and rewriting. I'm going back and cutting out what doesn't serve the story. I'm separating the wheat from the chaff. It's not easy work. It demands persistence. But I do it because I believe in the story and its telling, and because I also believe that it will yield its fruit in its season.

In much the same way, our own lives are narratives crafted by way of thoughts, words, and deeds. And, like in any draft, the story can be filled as much to the brim with perfected and engaging material as it also can with junk to purge and improvements to be made. But even in the midst of imperfection there's always a masterpiece.

Jesus' parable about the sower reminds us how to craft that life story masterpiece. Stealing from others, looking for quick solutions, or allowing bitter resentments to choke us are all behaviors that endanger our integrity as God's children. But when we choose to repent, to see our mistakes from a different perspective, and then rewrite those narratives into a more sustainable thread, that's when real life-begetting creativity happens.

Yet amending the familiar, not-so-good patterns in our life stories is easier said than done, especially when we live in a world that increasingly distorts fact and fiction, and right and wrong. Now more than ever it's important for us

to sift through and toss that which does not serve our best interests. It's not easy work, revising and rewriting ourselves. It forces us to ask uncomfortable questions: What story is my life telling? What kind of character am I in God's narrative? Sometimes the light of truth can be disappointing. Thankfully, we have a God who gifts us with opportunities to make amendments.

Barbara Brown Taylor says it best in her book *Speaking of Sin: The Lost Language of Salvation*, "Our lives are God's sign language in a sin-sick world, and God has promised us the grace we need to point the way home" (68). That's why we're here. Those are the kind of characters God meant us to be. We're meant to bear witness to the Gospel and our baptismal covenant. We're meant to be living examples of the Good News of God's outrageous reconciling and unconditional love. Doing so will yield fruits beyond our wildest imaginations, and God will delight in God's masterpiece!