

StoryPath 2019

February 17, 2019

Third Reading: Luke 6: 17-26

***Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman**

In Mary Hoffman's *Amazing Grace*, young Grace loves stories, and often acts them out, giving herself the most exciting parts. When Grace learns of her class's production of Peter Pan, she immediately dreams of taking on the lead role. But her classmates don't think she is right for the part because she is a girl and because she is black. Grace tells her family about her classmates' comments. Her mother and grandmother encourage her and take her to a performance by a ballet dancer from Trinidad. When the time comes for auditions, Grace shines and leaves behind the hurt she experienced a few days earlier. Sometimes through life's tough experiences, we grow and we learn, and we may even experience God's blessings. In Jesus' words to his disciples, he pronounces blessings upon those who are experiencing tough things, such as poverty or grief. Even in the midst of such tough times, Jesus sees the potential for blessings and for positive experiences that counteract the tough ones. Even through her tough experiences, Grace grew and shined. How have you experienced blessings in times that were tough when you wouldn't expect it? How did you learn and grow?

7th Sunday after Epiphany

Year C: February 24, 2019

First Reading: Genesis 45:3-11, 15

***Hotel Bruce* by Ryan T. Higgins**

"God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors." In verse 7, Joseph tells his brothers that God sent him to Pharaoh, even though they sold him, to be a protector of his family during the time of famine. He repeats such sentiments a few more times in these selected verses, teaching us of God's provision through Joseph, despite the ill treatment of his brothers toward him. "I'll provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have will not come to poverty," he assures his kin in verse 11. Likewise, Bruce learns another lesson of provision in this new story of Bruce the bear who is mother to four goslings. Upon returning from winter migration one spring, Bruce discovers that his home has been taken over by various animals and rodents. This makes Bruce very angry and he kicks everyone out. However, Bruce is ultimately reminded about provision and hospitality in this silly next story of a bear who begrudgingly becomes a caring parent to orphans and others in need.

March 3rd Gospel Reading: Luke 9:28-36

***The Thank You Book* by Mo Willems**

(Written for ages 4-8)

Taking a different twist on the Transfiguration narrative, the *Thank You Book* emphasizes the importance of simple words, such as "listen." We can safely assume that the voice in the cloud is God who is instructing us to listen to Jesus. There are two instances in the Luke version of the Transfiguration story that speak to listening – on the mountain and upon the healing. On the mountain, a voice from the cloud declares to Peter, James, and John: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" Later in the passage Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and the ill boy was healed. In Willem's book, Piggie declares that they are going to thank everyone, to which Gerald replies in confusion, "Everyone?" Gerald is afraid Piggie will forget someone and tries multiple times to inform Piggie that they have in fact forgotten someone. Piggie won't listen to Gerald, but when they do, Piggie is embarrassed at who they've forgotten. At the end we see that Piggie is grateful. This book could be used in two ways: to express the

transforming power of words (as we see in the healing), or to express the importance of listening. Either way, the story reveals a character who is transformed by their partner and by their reader.

March 3rd Second Reading: **2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2**

***Pete the Cat: Snow Daze* by James Dean**

Comment: One morning Pete wakes up to discover it has snowed and he's home from school. Then it continues to snow and he quickly realizes that too many snow days makes one weary. Pete misses his friends, teacher, and school but is unable to get to school because the roads are covered in lots of snow. In a bold move, Pete begins to plow the streets by himself and other cats pitch in. Eventually everyone is able to return to school because the roads are cleared, and all of the cats are happy! In this letter, the Corinthians are reminded that they can't remain on the mountaintop and become satisfied with the status quo. Rather, we are all being transformed into action through the glory of the Lord. Verse 12 says, "Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside." No, living in the Spirit of the Lord produces freedom, and we are to commend ourselves to the concerns of everyone else. Pete could have stayed put, but his desire to return to his friends at school compelled him, so he acted. When Pete acted, others saw and acted, too. Because of Pete's boldness, others were coerced and ultimately everyone benefitted. In both Pete's story and the Corinthian letter, we are reminded that we have the capacity to inspire and transform others.

March 10th Second Reading: **Romans 10:8b-13**

***Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun* by Maria Dismondy**

(Written for ages 4-11)

Donald W. Musser's theological interpretation of the Romans text for today suggests that the text includes the following theological themes: universal inclusiveness (v. 11-13), the nearness of salvation (v. 8b-9), and God is the starting and ending points of our repentance and salvation (v. 12). Dismondy's book is a wonderful interpretation of these three themes for school-aged children. Lucy is picked upon by classmate Ralph for enjoying strange food (spaghetti in a hot dog bun) and for having unruly hair. This upsets Lucy, but she's too bothered to share her hurt with her Papa Gino or teacher Miss Marcia. As she falls asleep, Papa Gino whispers, "Always remember, Papa is here for you. If something's not right, we can work on fixing it together." When Lucy is confronted with the opportunity to shun and mock bully Ralph, she remembers Papa Gino's words: "Even if we are different from others on the outside, we all have a heart with feelings on the inside." Ultimately Lucy and Ralph work out their differences in the story that illustrates for us inclusion, God's presence in our repentance, and the nearness of God's blessings.