

Sermon Love Made Real – a Family Service

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Homily

Love Made Real

(props: chairs, lapel mics, dragon head, sword)

Centuries ago when mapmakers would draw maps of the world as they knew it, the farthest reaches of their maps, down in the corner and on the edges, would often have a certain phrase written: “Here there be monsters.” People knew without a doubt that when they encountered something or someone strange from a place beyond their reckoning, there was a good chance it or he or she was a monster. Only the bravest, hardiest and most adventuresome souls were willing to travel where no one they knew had gone before.

Well, they were half right and half wrong. There *are* monsters – we stay away from angry grizzly bears and elephants. [Dragon comes down the aisle.] But even more frightening than angry grizzly bears are people with monstrous ideas. What’s a monstrous idea? Any idea that turns a stranger into someone you are afraid of so much that you think you have to hurt them first. [bop the dragon] We imagine that strangers we are so afraid of must be dragons. Some people who think this way come from foreign lands where no one we know has gone before. Some of them come from our very own country.

We live in times when people are seeing other people as dragons, and feeling afraid more than they have ever been. There is an urge to fear out there. I know: people with monstrous ideas are real. We see in the news every day and night people who use weapons and words and break our laws and all of the principles we hold dear; to act with compassion and do justice and treat everyone the way we would like to be treated. There are dragons out there. I’ve seen them, you’ve seen them: they are on our playgrounds and on our television screens: people who think we have to be so fearful of strangers that we have to hurt them first, or keep them away.

SARAH: Why hello, do I know you?

DRAGON: No.

SARAH: Is your skin a different color than mine?

OWEN: Well, it’s green. [BOP]

SARAH: Are your eyes different from mine?

DRAGON: Um, they pop out of the top of my head. [BOP]

SARAH: Do you speak English?

DRAGON: Yes.

SARAH: Parli Italiano?

DRAGON: Si! (SEE) [BOP]

SARAH: Hablas espanol?

DRAGON: Si! (SEE) [BOP]

SARAH: Parlez vous francais?

DRAGON: Oui! (OOEE) [BOP]

SARAH: Sprechen ze deutche?

DRAGON: Yahvohl! [BOP]

SARAH: Vuhee gavaritzheeyeh parussky?

DRAGON: Da! (DAH) [BOP]

SARAH: **SHO**ma **FAR**rsi soh**BAT** meku**NEUD**?

DRAGON: **BA**leh, yeh **kYAM**! [BOP]

SARAH: Do you believe in Allah?

DRAGON: Yes, I am a Muslim [BOP, BOP, BOP]

[DRAGON transfers the dragon head to Sarah]

SARAH: Wait, how did I become the dragon? I don't want to be the monster!

DRAGON: Your ideas made *you* into a monster.

[DRAGON returns to his seat.]

But I don't want to be a dragon! People will be afraid of me.

How do we want to be treated by someone who doesn't know us? We want to be treated carefully, kindly and respectfully. As if we had something in common, simply by being human. And, maybe, if they get to know us, they might treat us as a potential friend.

Can we tell from just looking at a person if they are dragons with monstrous ideas? No, not really.

So if we can't tell from looking at a person if they have monstrous ideas, how do we know if they are dragons, or someone who might become our friend?

We have to listen to their ideas, and see how they treat others.

How about if sometimes *we* are monsters? How about if sometimes *we* have monstrous ideas? Sometimes we do. Why does this happen?

When we are afraid of things, to the point that they are unreasoning fears, we call them phobias. Phobias are what can make us want to run away from a thing or a person, or keep them away from us, or make us want to hurt them before they hurt us. There are all different kinds of phobias out there...

Cynophobia = fear of dogs

Ailurophobia= fear of cats

Claustrophobia=fear of small spaces

Agoraphobia=fear of large spaces

Coulrophobia=fear of clowns

Pedophobia=fear of children

Homophobia=fear of gay people
Christianophobia=fear of Christians
Islamophobia=fear of Muslims

Not all fears are phobias. Sometimes there *are* reasonable fears, but we still have to respond in ways that don't turn us into dragons. Yes, there are Muslims, and Christians, and Jews and all kinds of folks who have monstrous ideas but *most* of them do not. Most people just want to be safe and get along, maybe even get ahead. So we have to figure out a way to accept most people and not hold them responsible for the dragons among them.

How do we stop being afraid? Most folks get over their phobias by trying to stand up to them a little bit at a time. Stay with the thing you're afraid of for a little bit longer each time. If it's a particular kind of person, get to know them a little bit at a time. Offer people what you'd want them to offer you; be careful, respectful and kind until you get to know them better.

What about dragons; how do you stop a dragon once you know his or her ideas? How do you stop a dragon from making other people afraid? Dragons seem to be pretty powerful people, can't they? They seem to be powerful because they don't care about hurting others. But we have a way to deal with that, don't we? We have love on our side, and we have justice. Love *and* Justice.

A great man once said:

“Power without love is reckless and abusive,
and love without power is sentimental and anemic.
Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice,
and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

The opposite of fear is love. The most important kind of love is active choice (Kathleen McTigue). We can choose to love, to stand up to fear, even when those around us give in to theirs. Knowing how to choose love, to choose to treat everyone fairly and not fearfully, is justice. Choosing the love that stands up to fear makes us powerful – especially if we know how to use it. Justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

Don't give the dragon power by becoming one yourself.
Reject the monstrous ideas loudly and consistently.
Tell everyone you know how you feel about the real dragon.
Teach the dragon how to be a better person.

Remember the words of Cornel West: “Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.” Faith is our love made public and that is love made real. Never forget that love is stronger than dragons. There will be no dragons *here*.