

SERMON
“More Beyond”
Psalm 57:1-11, John 8:12-19, 21-24
Sunday, November 7, 2021

In Spain, where Christopher Columbus died in 1506, there is a monument that commemorates that great adventurer.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the monument is the statue of a lion at the base of it, where the Spanish national motto is engraved. The lion is reaching out with its paw and destroying one of the Latin words that had been a part of Spain’s motto for centuries.

That motto was “No More Beyond.” See, before Columbus sailed to the Americas, Spain thought that everyone had already reached the outer limits of the earth. Columbus had proven that there really is “More Beyond,” and that is why the lion is tearing away at the “NO” in the motto, leaving “More Beyond.”

And the same is true for the psalmist who wrote the 57th Psalm; even though he experienced what was like lions gobbling him down with spears and arrows instead of teeth and sharp swords instead of tongues; he could still praise God for a love that went beyond the clouds.

The same is true for any of us who have said yes to Jesus and journeyed with him on the way: there is “more beyond.”

More beyond the clouds...

More beyond our lives...

More beyond our sins...

I can’t help but think of the middle-aged matriarch who made an announcement to her children regarding her upcoming birthday. She said, "This is it! No more birthdays after this. I'm not celebrating anymore. I don't want to hear about birthdays anymore. I don't want you counting. I don't want to keep track. Is that understood?"

Her children were not excited about that, but, as this is what their mother wanted, they consented. The day of her birthday came. The doorbell rang, she answered it, and there was a florist holding a beautiful bouquet of flowers. The bouquet was gorgeous, but the florist was very mournful and long-faced. She showed him into the living room where he placed the flowers on the mantle. Then he turned in an unusually pastoral manner, patted her on the shoulder, and said, "I'm thinking of you today."

Sadly, nodding his head, he walked out.

She wondered what that was all about. She was puzzled until she read the card on the bouquet. It was from her children and it read, "Mom, wishing you a great day on this, your last birthday."

In this life, who among us hasn’t struggled with the no more beyond. We are as limited by our own inabilities to see beyond whatever borders and boundaries that have scarred our lives. Yet in spite of those scars, the Resurrected Christ, like the lion in Columbus’ monument; is tearing away at the “NO” so that we can see and experience the “MORE BEYOND.”

Pulitzer-prize-winning poet Phyllis McGinley once said of the saints: *“The wonderful thing about saints is that they were human. They lost their tempers, got hungry, scolded God, were egotistical, or testy or impatient in their turns, made mistakes and regretted them. Still, they went on doggedly blundering toward heaven.”* Each and every person we have remembered this morning were no different; in their very dying, however, whatever limitations they had were; like fog struck with the rays of the morning sun; lifted and today are fully and wholly experiencing the more beyond in ways we can only imagine.

In John’s Gospel Jesus, in the 8th chapter, is having a heated debate with the Pharisees. The Pharisees, according to Jesus have come to a dead end. They no longer can see the “more beyond” because they refuse to see Jesus for who he truly is: “the World’s Light.”

I love how he describes their predicament: *“You’re tied down to the mundane; I’m in touch with what is beyond your horizons. You live in terms of what you see and touch. I’m living on other terms. I told you that you were missing God in all this. You’re at a dead end. If you won’t believe I am who I say I am, you’re at the dead end of sins. You’re missing God in your lives.”*

The good news is that Jesus is our “more beyond.”

When we reach our limit of compassion...he loves for us.

When we find we can no longer forgive...he gives us the ability to forgive.

When we reach the end of our rope...he gives us life.

If we can't see this, then we like the pharisees, have come to a dead end.

I am here today to tell you there is something beyond the dead end. Life may be filled with its troubles and pain. Anguish and hurt, like the lions of the 57th Psalm, may be tearing you apart; but God, like that lion on Columbus' monument in Spain, has torn the “NO” away from the “MORE BEYOND!”