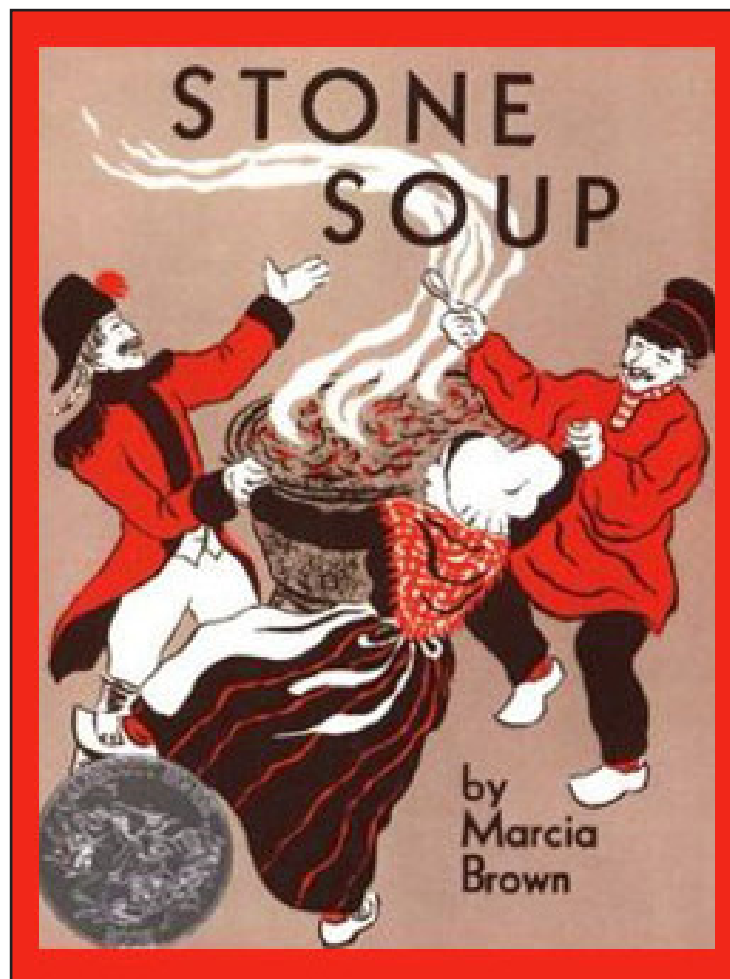


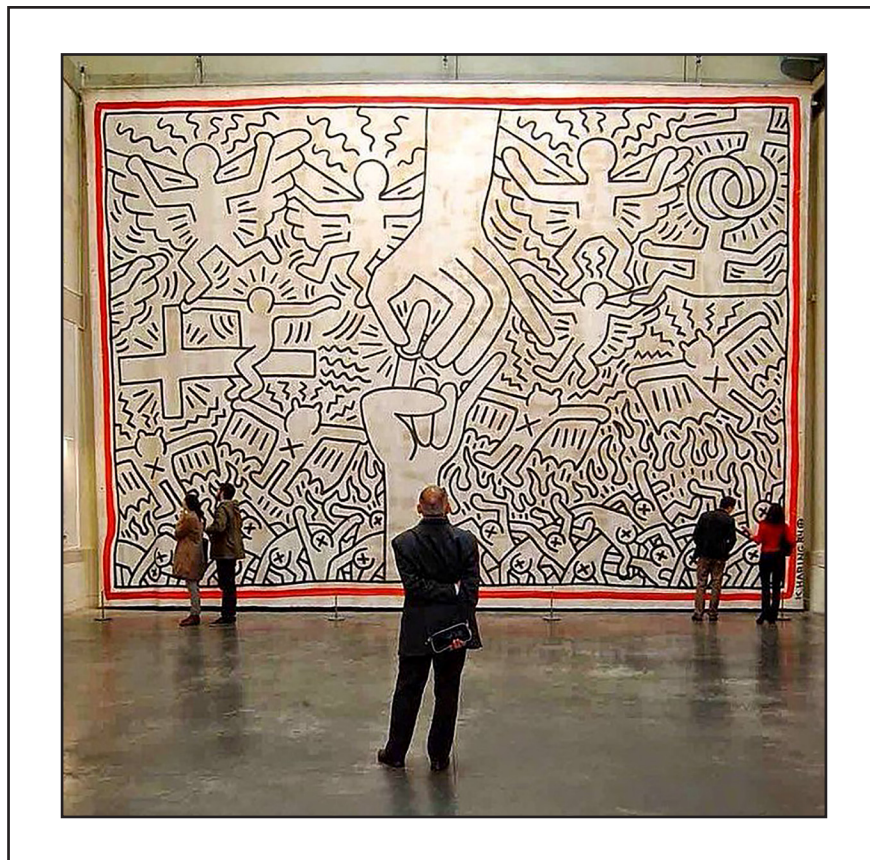
Living Grace

Cycle A 6th Sunday
Ordinary Time

“JESUS CALL US TO GATHER THE HUNGRY, BUT HOW?”



*In **Stone Soup**, some travelers come to a village, carrying nothing more than an empty cooking pot. Upon their arrival, the villagers are unwilling to share any of their food stores with the hungry travelers. Then the travelers go to a stream and fill the pot with water, drop a large stone in it, and place it over a fire. The travelers tell the curious villagers that they are making “stone soup”, which tastes wonderful and which they would be delighted to share with the villagers, although it still needs a little bit of garnish, which they are missing, to improve the flavor. And the story continues as the travelers invite the villagers out of their self preoccupations and community life to discover the joy of sharing.*



MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL

Painting by Keith Haring ~ 1984

New York, New York ~ United States of America

EXPLORING THE ART:

Keith Haring was one of the most well-known artists of his time. His signature style is based on abstract, stylized forms worked into interlocking human figures and tightly arranged patterns. He used only a few basic colors applied as flat areas of paint and shaped into thick silhouettes. Haring's work has a distinctively graphic, cartoonish quality with repetitive motifs. He found inspiration for his art in the popular culture that surrounded him, from New York's hip-hop scene to Disney's cartoons, and he also engaged with the main social and political issues of his time, such as the AIDS epidemic, South African apartheid, and the American conservative politics of the 1980s. His imagery has become a widely recognized visual language of the 20th century. Haring was committed to social causes throughout his life. Even when very young, he was driven by an urge to change the world.

In the 1980's, he worked on a series of public art projects around the world, such as painting a mural at the Melbourne National Gallery of Victoria and creating backdrops and costumes for contemporary ballets, including the huge 26ft x 36ft painting above. He created *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in 1984, as a theater curtain for the Ballet National de Marseilles in France, which included a choreographed piece by the same name. He designed a famous logo for an anti-litter campaign for the city of New York, and was even invited by a museum to paint on the Berlin Wall. This extremely varied list of commissions, which were often linked to humanitarian causes that Haring particularly cared about, contributed to establishing his style as iconic and recognizable.

VISUAL LANGUAGE OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Living Grace

READ-ALoud STORY



ABIDE IN ME

Vicki Shuck, Esperanza Arts

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love.

~ John 7:7-9

Read-aloud video link:

STONE SOUP

Written & Illustrated by Marcia Brown

Sunday Gospel

MATTHEW 5:17-37

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish
the law or the prophets.

I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.

Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away,
not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter
will pass from the law,
until all things have taken place.

Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least
of these commandments

and teaches others to do so
will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments
will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

**I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses
that of the scribes and Pharisees,
you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.**

“You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
*You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable
to judgment.*

But I say to you,
whoever is angry with his brother
will be liable to judgment;
and whoever says to his brother, ‘Raqa,’
will be answerable to the Sanhedrin;
and whoever says, ‘You fool,’
will be liable to fiery Gehenna.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar,
and there recall that your brother
has anything against you,
leave your gift there at the altar,
go first and be reconciled with your brother,
and then come and offer your gift.

Settle with your opponent quickly while on
the way to court.

Otherwise your opponent will hand you over
to the judge,
and the judge will hand you over to the guard,
and you will be thrown into prison.

Amen, I say to you,
you will not be released until you have paid
the last penny.

“You have heard that it was said,
You shall not commit adultery.

But I say to you,
everyone who looks at a woman with lust
has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
If your right eye causes you to sin,
tear it out and throw it away.

It is better for you to lose one of your members
than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna.
And if your right hand causes you to sin,
cut it off and throw it away.

It is better for you to lose one of your members
than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

“It was also said,
*Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill
of divorce.*

But I say to you,
whoever divorces his wife - unless the marriage
is unlawful -
causes her to commit adultery,
and whoever marries a divorced woman
commits adultery.

“Again you have heard that it was said to
your ancestors,
*Do not take a false oath,
but make good to the Lord all that you vow.*

But I say to you, do not swear at all;
not by heaven, for it is God’s throne;
nor by the earth, for it is his footstool;
nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.
Do not swear by your head,
for you cannot make a single hair white or black.
Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’
Anything more is from the evil one.”

Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

GATHERING THE PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM, HERE AND NOW!

This Gospel is part of the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus began teaching for the first time. He had been baptized, called his followers, and began to do miracles and healing. Here he addresses the question of what he had come for, and what "revolution" his mission would bring about. He starts with what the religion of the Israelites has been built on - the law and the prophets. He reassures his listeners, "I have come not to abolish, but to fulfill".

Jesus gives many examples of the laws, such as, "you shall not kill", and takes it a step further, proclaiming that if you are angry, you are killing your brother. He teaches to not just be about bringing your sacrifice to the altar, but to become reconciled with your family. To go and reconcile with your brother is the more important gift. Don't leave it to the law makers to decide for you what is right and wrong. Have the law written within. Jesus calls us to interior self-governance, but he doesn't stop there. He says the new law is the law of Love, the building of the kingdom of heaven. "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." How can we do that? What might that look like?

Our contemporary story, Stone Soup helps us to understand. The traveling soldiers give us an example of how to grow the heaven on earth. They come into town hungry and in need, but the people are fearful and hide all of their goods from the soldiers and each other. Their hearts and their arms are closed tightly in protection. The soldiers outwit the townspeople with an invitation to share in the making of a delicious soup. Gradually each of the townspeople moves beyond fear to opening their hearts and their belongings to the soldiers and to each other. The story culminates with the whole town gathered at a banquet table together celebrating the bounty they have collectively created. Those who thought they had nothing to share, together created a feast fit for a king.

When we follow Jesus we become like the soldiers - cleverly aiding in the work of inviting people to open their hearts and resources to each other. Through this "way" heaven comes to earth. Let's get to work. Let's make soup for starts, and invite out neighbors over!

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

YOUR STORY: When have you had to ask other people to help you with a project? Who did you ask? Was it difficult or easy to ask for help? Have you ever had worked on group project? What did it feel like when you were working on the project together? How did it feel when you were finished?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: How are the soldiers welcomed by the community? Who were they thinking of at first? The soldiers appeal to the townspeople imaginations, how does that help them to let go of their protective fears? Through their imaginations and curiosities being stirred, how were their hearts able to open up? Collectively what kind of magic happened? How did they move from their fears and lack, to creating a feast fit for a king?

THE GOSPEL STORY: From the gospel reading who does God want us to follow? What if the teachers and leaders are thinking more about themselves? What does Jesus teach here. Does it get us off the hook to just follow them? How are we called to move?

What does growing the kingdom of heaven look like? What does the banquet table they gathered around remind you of in our community?

Biblical Background

MATTHEW 5:17-37

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: This teaching continues from the Sermon on the Mount that began last week in Galilee on a mountain hillside.

TERMS: Scribes were the 'scripture scholars' of their day, specializing in the Law (Torah) and its proper observance.

The Law was the Ten Commandments given to Israelites by Moses, and the many other observances that surrounded them, as laid out in the first five books of the Bible, which are called the Pentateuch.

Prophets Throughout the history of the Israelite people, prophets would rise up. The role of the prophet was to speak a higher level of truth to the community and to the leadership. The leadership existed of Kings and Judges, and the prophets' role would be one who was inspired by God to be a check and balance to the leadership and the community.

The Kingdom of Heaven was a term used by Matthew because he was Jewish and did not use the word God, however it is synonymous with Kingdom of God in the other gospels. It meant the breaking forth of "God's ways" in the world. Jesus had come to bring God's ways, and the marriage of heaven and earth.

Righteousness means proper and honorable relationships with other people, and was understood in this sermon to mean the other followers of Jesus and God. Matthew in his gospel calls these people "brothers" which signifies relationship and kinship to one another, more than simply observers.

The Sanhedrin was the highest judicial and ecclesiastical council of the ancient Jewish nation, composed of 70-72 members.

Gehenna was a physical valley outside of Jerusalem where rubbish was burning all the time. It was one of the oldest valleys surrounding ancient Jerusalem. Therefore, our imaginary vision of hell comes from this symbolic area that always had a fire burning.

Oath This was a contractual relationship not only with another person, but also with the divine. It has a cultural and divine nature to it, and in biblical times had consequences for one's lineage. The oath had authority over one's past family heritage and into one's future.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: The Middle East was, and is today, an honor/shame based society, versus the right/wrong culture that we have in our America. Jesus is putting forth the well known laws, and then challenging his listeners that to follow the law is the minimal requirement. To participate, and lead others into the Kingdom of God, requires much more.

INSIGHT INTO MEANING: In this section Jesus is dealing with conflicts that have traditionally led to feuds and deaths. He speaks of the results of deeply broken laws dealing with murder, adultery, divorce, and going to court. He calls his followers to a higher law, and challenges the ways of the leaders and status quo, but they can still remain safe by not breaking the laws. The higher level of action will "shame" the resistance, and prove the call that Jesus brings people, to a new level of righteousness that outdoes the current minimal adherence to the law.

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Use your imagination to dream of how you might invite people to make a “stone soup” in your community. What fears would have to be overcome first? What might working together look like and what would your stone soup taste like?

GOSPEL CHARACTER QUALITIES: BRIDGE BUILDER
STRENGTH IN COMMUNITY

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Lent is coming up soon. Plan now to invite a family over for a Lenten soup dinner with a Stone Soup theme. Have everyone bring a vegetable for the soup and a spiritual gift their family has to share. What would a “Spiritual Stone Soup” look like if you put all your gifts together? How could you further the kingdom of God in your midst?