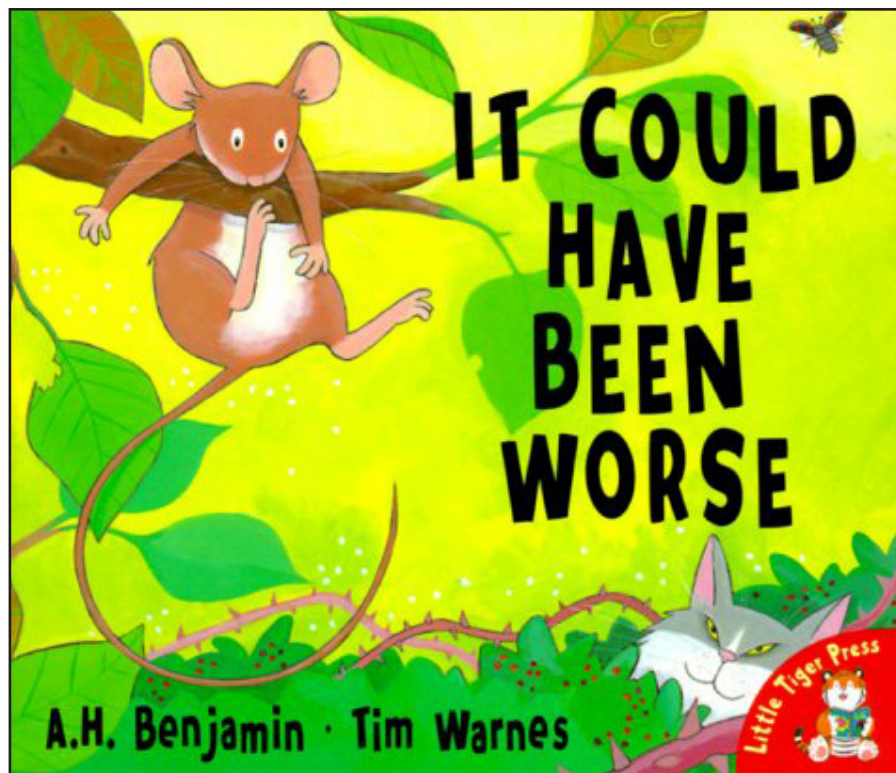


Living Grace

Cycle C 33rd Sunday
Ordinary Time

“BY YOUR PERSEVERANCE, YOU WILL SAVE YOUR LIVES”



It Could Have Been Worse tells the story of a seemingly unfortunate mouse who gets himself into a series of minor scrapes and mishaps. What the oblivious mouse doesn't realize, but which is clear to us through the dramatic illustrations, is that by being so focused on his own tasks, even with all the mishaps, he avoided the much worse disasters happening all around him!

Art & Faith

CELEBRATING THE BEAUTY & TRADITION
OF SACRED ART



JERUSALEM AS CENTER OF THE WORLD

Naive Painting by Raphael Perez

Tel Aviv, Israel ~ 2013

EXPLORING THE ART:

This painting is a stylized map of Jerusalem as the center of the world for the three religions, and communicates the brotherhood among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The center illustration of Jerusalem includes the Western Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Famous sites from the rest of the world surround the center including Big Ben, the Statue of Liberty, the Eiffel Tower, the Tower of Pisa, the Sydney Opera House, the Taj Mahal, and the Kremlin.

The artist, Raphael Perez, was born in 1965 and was raised in Jerusalem. He now lives and works in Tel Aviv. Growing up, Perez was exposed to the works of great painters by his father, but he did not begin painting himself until the age of 23. He served in the Israel Defense Forces in the Artillery Corps, and from 1989 to 1992, he studied art at the College of Visual Arts in Beersheba. For 15 years, Perez worked as a counselor at a youth shelter, and as a preschool sports and art teacher. The "naive art" style that he uses here in the painting above, was influenced by his experience working with children. Perez's paintings depict Tel Aviv's urban life in a naive style, full of color, optimism and joy of life.

The style of "naive art" has a simple and unsophisticated look. The term originally referred to art made by artists who had no formal training. Now, however, naive art has evolved into its own style used by trained artists who reject conventional expertise in the representation or depiction of real objects. Naive works are characterized by a whimsical, childlike quality, and are often extremely detailed. Using brilliant, saturated colors, an artist utilizes colors and mixed media that are not true to reality, and often juxtaposed against one another. There is also a characteristic absence of realistic perspective, which creates the illusion that figures are "pasted on" or floating in space. This technique also contributes to the unrefined, child-like quality of the naive style.

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:

IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE

Written by A. H. Benjamin & Illustrated by Tim Warnes

Sunday Gospel

LUKE 21:5-19

While some people were speaking about
how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings,
Jesus said, "All that you see here--
the days will come when there will not be left
a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down."

Then they asked him,
"Teacher, when will this happen?
And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?"

He answered,
"See that you not be deceived,
for many will come in my name, saying,
'I am he,' and 'The time has come.'

Do not follow them!
When you hear of wars and insurrections,
do not be terrified; for such things must happen first,
but it will not immediately be the end."

Then he said to them,
"Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.
There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues
from place to place;
and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky.

"Before all this happens, however,
they will seize and persecute you,
they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons,
and they will have you led before kings and governors
because of my name.

It will lead to your giving testimony.
Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand,
for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking
that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute.
You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends,
and they will put some of you to death.

You will be hated by all because of my name,
but not a hair on your head will be destroyed.

By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

WHEN DIFFICULTIES COME DO NOT LOSE HEART - GOD'S PRESENCE AND PROTECTION WILL ALWAYS HOLD YOU.

In our children's story we meet a mouse who endures endless harrowing and life-threatening situations. "Why does everything bad happen to me!" Yet, he carries on. We have all had hard days like this. Sometimes it seems like an entire day is filled with mishaps and problems. We can only see these situations from our limited point of view, and we only see what we choose to see. We cannot see the big picture - all that has come before and after. This is just the point Jesus is trying to make in this gospel - he is trying to prepare his followers for when they cannot understand why everything seems to be going wrong.

In this Gospel Jesus' followers are admiring the glory of the Jewish temple. In our Catholic tradition, we have a similar connection with the Vatican in Rome. St. Peter's Basilica is the central church of Catholics all around the world, and it has glorious architecture and is filled with beautiful art. The Jewish temple in Jerusalem was much the same - it was enormous and held amazing beauty. Jesus warns his followers not to place their security in the glory, strength, and beauty of the temple. He proclaims that soon it will be torn down and not a stone will be left. This was very alarming, as the temple represented their strength and their security as Jewish people. This would be just as alarming to Catholics today, if someone prophesied that the Vatican would be destroyed. It would shake our confidence as a people. Jesus' prophecy (a foretelling of a future event) did come true. 72 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, the temple was completely destroyed and has remained so to this day.

In our children's story, the illustrations show us the big picture of what is going on behind the scenes, that the little bird cannot see. In this Gospel, Jesus explains to his followers what will be happening behind the scenes, during this upcoming time of instability. He also teaches us, that while we should be aware of what appears on the surface, that is not the full picture of the situation. He warns that sometimes it will be hard to trust any sign or any person, even among our own families. There will be times that we have to trust what we cannot see, and to believe in 'the Greater One', who is beyond only what we can see. God who made us, also protects us from true harm. Yes, there will be challenges, but God's love will protect us for a greater good and a greater purpose. In the children's story, mouse perseveres through all the mishaps, and in doing so his life is saved.

We will all be tested - no one can escape from this truth. But if we cooperate with God, we will be given the words and wisdom we need, when we need them. Our adversaries will be powerless when we yield to the Holy Spirit. When we walk with God, we walk with a grace that will hold us in all things and bring us safely home, both in this life and in life everlasting. Nothing on earth can take that away. This is the Good News that Jesus came to share with all of us!

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

YOUR STORY: Have you ever had a day that felt like "it couldn't be worse"? What kind of things went wrong? What got you through it? Have you seen others have days like this? How can losing faith, hope, or love make things worse?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: What was mouse complaining about? What could have happened that could have been worse? What was the bigger picture?

THE GOSPEL STORY: How does Jesus want to see his followers handle these kind of "it couldn't be worse" days? In 1 Corinthians 13, the Apostle Paul says, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." How does the idea of "being held always and forever in God's love" make things better? How can we share the peace and freedom we find in this "blessed assurance" with others as Good News? What makes it so good?

We will all be tested - no one can escape from this truth. But when we walk with God, we walk with a grace that will hold us in all things and bring us safely home both in this life, and in life everlasting. Nothing on earth can take that away. This is the Good News that Jesus came to share with all of us!

Biblical Background

LUKE 21:5-19

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: Somewhere in the temple area.

TERMS: Temple The temple was the center of Jewish worship. It was 15 stories of gleaming marble and gold. Solomon built the first temple, but was destroyed by Babylonians in 586BC. The second temple was built in 526BC by Ezra.

See that you not be deceived Prophecy required fulfillment in order to be authenticated. Many might not live long enough to witness the prophecy's fulfillment. For this reason Jesus cautions his disciples against being deceived by those who proclaimed prophecy in his name. Perseverance is the key here - Jesus encourages us to stick it out. This is the test, and this is how we will protect ourselves and others from being deceived.

Wisdom to speak God inspires us to speak truth through the power of the Holy Spirit. The truth is powerful.

You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends... There was great family persecution during the turbulence stirred by the Judean revolt against Rome. Jesus' disciples - who had been urged to hate their family (Luke 14:26-27), to leave them behind (Luke 18:20), and to join Jesus' new extended family of followers - became persecuted by those rebuffed relatives. Jesus himself was even handed over by one of the Twelve apostles, his kin group (for all purposes, his family).

CULTURAL INSIGHT: Luke wrote this account in about 80-85 AD. It is important to realize that when this Gospel was written, the temple had already fallen, and there had been many persecutions of Christians. It is possible that Luke was reflecting back on history with the foretelling of these life shattering events, as having an authority and a historical purpose through being prophesied by Jesus. This is a possibility, and we can see how it would have helped the people of the day to gain perspective by attaching the awareness of these challenges to Jesus. Even though Jesus knew what was to come, it did not shake his faith, and that is the important message here. We are all encouraged to have trust and belief in Jesus for all things. Through all persecutions and strife, we are to keep the eternal perspective. Eye on the ultimate prize - eternal life with God in heaven. Jesus illustrated how to do this by his life and teaching.

INSIGHT INTO MEANING: As Americans, we are future-orientated, thinking about, planning, and storing for our futures. But the Mediterranean culture is present-orientated. They pray, "Give us today our bread for today." In the Mediterranean world, only God knows the distant future and distant past. After that one generation, and many additional generations have passed away, and all things still have not taken place. Prophets know the future. The only way to test the prophet is to assure what they have said has come true. Luke wants this Gospel to affirm Jesus as a prophet, as he points out how much of what he said had already come true. Hopefully, this would wake people up to take more seriously the path of life.

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Share a story of God's love and protection in difficult times. How can you now look back and see that "it could have been worse"?

GOSPEL CHARACTER QUALITIES: **PERSEVERANCE**
HOPE IN THE UNSEEN

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Research stories about natural disasters. Can you find any silver linings in those stories? Can you see God's presence at work? Not all things that happen are good, but we are promised that all things (even the bad things) come together for the good of those who love God. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)