

Let it Be

Not long ago, Dr. Phil of Oprah Winfrey fame, was asked who he'd most like to interview.

Without missing a beat, he said he'd most like to interview Jesus Christ.

"I'd like to have a conversation with him about the meaning of life," the good doctor said.

And I thought to myself, "Oh no you wouldn't!"

Jesus is the last person you'd want to have that kind of talk with.

Just look what he does today to the chief priests.

They challenge Jesus to show his credentials, taking the road of the high and mighty authority types, and before you know it, Jesus has their heads swimming, their faces beet red, and their status completely upended as they find themselves at the tail end of heaven's parade, trailing behind even the hated tax collectors, even the prostitutes.

If you're looking for polite conversation about philosophical questions, go get Joel Olsteen to be your guest, and forget about Jesus.

You see, when we start to get close to Jesus, we start to get close to this God who keeps telling us, in words we keep refusing to hear, that God is not like us: "My ways are not your ways," says God to a human race with its fingers stuck in its collective ears, faces squinted up, eyes closed.

Especially in this political season, how many politicians are out there trying to lead God around the circus tent like a trained elephant.

It is a depressing sight to behold, since they've not a clue about the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Jesus, of you and me.

Paul's beautiful hymn this morning in his letter to the Philippians goes right to the heart of what makes God so very different from us.

With us, it's all about striving, all about getting ahead, all about being the best.

With God, it's all about coming down, surrendering, letting go, letting it be.

So Paul sings this hymn to his beloved community at Philippi, a community, we learn as we keep reading, in which two of its powerful women leaders are at loggerheads.

And his hymn reminds them, and us, of emptying, of humility, of obedience, of death.

Qualities that for the most part most people run from like the plague, turn out to be the very qualities of God.

My daughter came home in tears last week because she lost the election for school historian.

She was so upset because the popular girl won the election, and that popular girl who won didn't even know what a school historian does!

So we talked about popularity and politics and that the victory is in the trying, not the winning; none of which consoled her very much.

The next morning, on the way to school, she said: "And you know what else dad, my campaign slogan -- was in Latin!"

I nearly bit through my tongue to keep from laughing because this little 11 year old couldn't see any connection between losing the election after campaigning in a foreign language!

I share that story with you because of the Latin word that sits in the heart of Paul's hymn today: "FIAT."

Not as in the Italian car, which, I've been told, stands for Fix It Again Tony, but "fiat" as in the phrase: "Let it be."

"Let it be" God says at the dawn of creation.

"Let it be" the teenage girl says to the angel.

"Let it be" Jesus says, sweating blood in the Garden as he awaits his arrest.

"Let it be" say you or I after enduring the excruciating pain of loved ones ripped from our lives.

"Let it be."

It is not the end.

"Let it be" is instead the gateway into a new creation, an entirely new life.

At the dawn of creation, "Let it be" is followed by light.

Mary's "let it be" allows her womb to hold the child who will join together heaven and earth.

The "let it be" of Jesus in the garden leads, finally, to the miracle of resurrection: the sign and promise of the new life awaiting us all.

And then there is our own "let it be."

It never comes easy.

It never comes quickly.

But when it comes, it opens a door to a new kind of life; one with plenty of scar tissue to be sure, but also one, after a long time has passed, with a sense of depth, a sense of calm, a sense of peace.

On the radio a couple weeks ago, NPR was interviewing a psychiatrist who was concerned about the great fear so many people have in dying these days.

He decided to help them conquer or at least reduce their fear.

They told him they were afraid of being totally forgotten after death; that all of their accomplishments and achievements would be lost to the sands of time.

So he came up with a very 21st century solution, one that grows directly out of our sense of self, our ego.

He had them tell their stories, he edited and revised the stories with them until they told the story of the life of each patient exactly as the patient wished it to read.

And I couldn't help but think how different this all is for a Christian.

For us, the call of Jesus is never to butter ourselves up, to shine with ego and pride.

The call of Jesus is to let it be, to let it go, trusting that you and I are not islands adrift on some uncaring sea; we are part and parcel of the body of Christ; we are sons and daughters of God; of a God who will never abandon us.

Our hope is not in posterity, it is in the loving embrace of the self-giving God, the God who bows to creation, who bows to you and I, the God who makes all things new.

And so, with that hope, perhaps we too can let it be.

