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St. James Episcopal Church-Fremont

The Rev. Kathy Crary

EASTER VI

Happy Mother's Day. Now, go clean your room. At some point in your life and mine we've heard the equivalent. Yep, she's gonna take care of you only just so far and then you have to do a few things on your own. The best she can do and all parents can do is raise you and me to be responsible, dependable, ethical and loving people with a dash of good humor and a bit of courage and self-motivation thrown into the mix.

All of those are wonderful traits and speak to me about the Christian life and lifestyle as it relates to our conversion and *metanoia* and the relationship we have with God outside our church walls.

We have two people to consider today, Lydia, the merchant in purple cloth and a guy sitting by the water waiting to be thrown in for his own healing. For those of you addicted to children's stories, as I am, today we meet Tigger and Eeyore.

Specific to both of our main characters is a seat by the water and an encounter with the holy. And there is a bit of a reversal at work here.

In the time of Lydia the merchant, in a world setting where we think of most things as andro-centric, ie, men rule, we have a woman who sells the most expensive cloth that is made, the yardage is purple. From what I have been able to track down, purple dye of that time was from several varieties of a Murax snail shell. The colors range from a deep red, a red purple and a dark purple almost to black. The sources of these snails and the dyes were controlled and the garments made from them were

expensive. It is believed that the only people who could afford these colors were royalty and the wealthy. I guess that is where we get the saying “born to the purple”.

Lydia, who prays and loves God and sells purple cloth, is meeting with other women down by the riverside. She hears and prays and her whole family is baptized and she plays host to Paul and perhaps those traveling with him.

This woman was ready, at the right moment, at the right intersection of time and place, she was there, alert, waiting and eager.

Switch now to the man at the pool. Tradition says the pool is touched by an angel or an angel’s wing. The first person thrown into the pool would be healed. Anyone else thrown in would just get wet.

He, too, is waiting for an opportunity. However, he has managed to wait 38 years and nothing has happened. When Jesus asks him if he wants to be healed, he doesn’t answer the question but explains why he is still there.

Opportunities being what they are, this man is so stuck in the unchanged moment. He isn’t looking with expectation, he isn’t eager, sitting by the water, complaining that no one will help him and a direct encounter with Jesus changes everything.

That encounter, that healing, that picking up the mat and walking away must have been hard. After all, the guy had been there 38 years. Can you hear him thinking, “This is all I know, this is my community, and this bearded guy walks up and wants to know if I want to be healed. What does THAT mean?”

How different their approaches to the God who approaches them. I am not saying any of this to cast any shadow over people who have not

been miraculously healed of their diseases. I am commenting on being stuck, for way too long, not answering the questions of Jesus, sitting at the pool, complaining about our circumstances to all who would hear us.

But with the encounter with the Holy, with the questions of Jesus, with the miracles that have happened in our lives, whether we recognized them or not: How is it that we will hear? What are we waiting for? At what levels are our expectations, at what intensity our anticipation? Who is calling you? What question has been asked? What occupies our minds and hearts as we sit by the water and wait?