



Nederland, Colorado is home to “The Carousel of Happiness.” The Carousel is “dedicated to inspiring happiness, well-being and service to others through stories and experience.”¹ For \$2 a ride, you can take a few minutes to relax and smile. You can reap the benefit of someone else’s dream and hard work.

There is even a “Story Catcher’s Booth” where you can tell your story. The reason for the Story Catcher’s Booth is the understanding that within each of us are stories unique to us and who we are that should be captured and preserved.

On so many fronts today, the world seems a bit like a carousel but one where the off switch doesn’t exist. Where now that I have chosen my animal to ride around on listening to music, reality and hard truths are somewhere out there and don’t really affect me. For a few minutes on that ride on the carousel, I can pretend my world is bright and sunny and all is well. Unfortunately, the ride does come to an end and the carousel closes for the night, so as much as I might wish to ride forever, I can’t. I have to get off. It’s time to re-engage with the world.

In this real world, where do we look for anchors? Where do we look for help in determining what is real and what is truth? How do we parse the overwhelming amount of information that flows into our homes and our lives everyday to determine how to live?

One approach is to pay attention to what Jesus said and did. We need to pay attention to what Jesus did at least as much as to what we believe Jesus said. Jesus lived at a time when the Scriptures were what we call the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible. The New Testament did not yet exist. Then as now, the Scriptures offer us a way to live according to how we understand God. It’s not easy, for if you read carefully, you are likely to find contradictions, positions that we now reject such as slavery being ok or women not being listened to and so forth. Set against that we have the two great commandments: love God and love neighbor. We have last week’s Gospel where Jesus said to pay to Caesar what is Caesar’s but also give to God what is God’s. And we know that everything is God’s.

Today’s Gospel is commonly referred to as the Beatitudes. They are part of what we call The Sermon on the Mount where Jesus taught the multitudes what the kingdom of God was really like. What reality and truth are from God’s perspective. For many of us, I suspect we have read this passage as “oh, these are the attitudes that I should have.” Poor in spirit, mourn, meek, hunger, merciful, persecuted.” Well, I’m not very good at any of those, so perhaps I’m not blessed.

Instead of feeling defeated and walking away from Jesus because I don’t live up to this standard, another reading of this text is to consider that the Beatitudes give us a picture of reality in God’s world. A world where “Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.” Blessed

¹ <https://www.carouselofhappiness.org/carousel-history-exhibition/> (October 30, 2020).

Will be. Blessed.... Are. Blessed, blessed, blessed.² In God's reality, all those who are hurting, and all those who seek are responded to and comforted, and fed, and cared for and justice abounds. All are blessed regardless of their circumstances. A dream for us on earth but reality in the world as God would have it.

Frederick Buechner is a theologian who wrote in The Faces of Jesus:

IF THE WORLD IS sane, then Jesus is mad as a hatter and the Last Supper is the Mad Tea Party. The world says, Mind your own business, and Jesus says, There is no such thing as your own business. The world says, Follow the wisest course and be a success, and Jesus says, Follow me and be crucified. The world says, Drive carefully—the life you save may be your own—and Jesus says, Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. The world says, Law and order, and Jesus says, Love. The world says, Get and Jesus says, Give. In terms of the world's sanity, Jesus is crazy as a coot, and anybody who thinks he can follow him without being a little crazy too is laboring less under a cross than under a delusion.³

These days we need to be crazy, at least a little bit. We need to stand tall and firm against the delusions of the world. We need to seek Christ in each person we see. We need to know - and to accept - that God's grace, God's blessing is with us even when we fail, even when we find it hard to seek justice and love mercy from God's perspective.

Whether we like each other or not, we are connected with each other because God loves each of us. God, through Jesus, has shown us what God's reality is. Everyone, regardless of circumstances, is blessed. Everyone will be responded to and taken care of and comforted. In the meantime, strive to be one who blesses others through seeing them – really seeing them. Strive to be someone who offers a smile, a meal, a ride, a listening ear and an open heart. When you do that, you can ride the Carousel of Happiness and it doesn't even cost \$2. **Amen.**

² Thanks to Debbie Thomas of "Journey with Jesus", October 25, 2020, for this suggestion.

³ <https://www.frederickbuechner.com/quote-of-the-day/2017/4/22/under-a-delusion> (October 30, 2020)