

WHISPERS OF CHANGE

A handful of life's little moments never fail to bring me a serene joy. A full moon. A kitten lapping at its water bowl. A hummingbird sipping nectar from a flower, defying laws of physics by staying aloft. The gentle clap of metallic wind chimes as a breeze passes through.



The LORD approached Elijah as a “tiny whispering sound.” Not through a “strong and heavy wind,” not in an earthquake, and not in a fire. At hearing this tiny whispering sound, he “hid his face in his cloak.”

I don't laugh a lot. My wife laughs a lot but I'm more comfortable with the chuckle (with the notable exceptions of Saturday Night Live and the stories from my friends Karl and Dave). I don't feel as if I'm missing a piece of life by not having the BIG LAUGH, by being funny, or finding the comedy in life. Instead I revel in the small instances of life that bring me joy, fleeting moments of joy which, by linking one to another and then to another, result in a fairly consistent chain of delight.

Like my chain of delight, which are small instances of joy linked together, a journey is nothing more than a series of incremental steps. History is not one grand plan but the material scraps of life's grace and misfortunes stitched together.

A just society doesn't just happen. One doesn't wake up one day and find that a social structure of sin has been thoroughly toppled by an earthquake of equity. Rarely do the fires of fairness sweep through the structures of injustice overnight.

Immediately after our inauguration, protests and marches filled calendars and streets for a long stretch of weekends. Then they stopped. The streets were quiet. People got tired. The NCAA Basketball Tournament was heating up. Spring and spring breaks.

This is the central flaw of mobilizing: it gathers like wildfire and then it's doused.

Organizing is incremental. Organizing is like a series of tiny whispering voices that gnaw at culture's conscience until culture listens. Successful mobilization brings press coverage. Successful organizing brings change; change to the systems that perpetuate injustice.

Two-thousand years ago, Paul waged a similar effort to change hearts and minds: giving everything he had to convince his fellow Jews that God's covenant was also meant for them.

Jesus tells Peter to have faith to walk on water and reach the other side. Like Paul and Peter, we need faith that we can reach the other side. Perhaps we can't walk on water, but perhaps we can swim.

Especially when we're pushed along by a gentle breeze. That's where we will find our joy, which is no laughing matter.

(Readings for the 19th Sunday of Ordinary Time)



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