

“While in Their Joy: Dancing Sure”

Molly Baskette has said, **“Life has been very messy lately. A tragic death, rampant illness, and tensions at work made every day a circus of struggle.”** (PAUSE) She continued, “I prayed fervently for God to make things a little easier. Come, Lord Jesus: resurrect the dead, heal the sick, and make the church on earth as it is in heaven!” (PAUSE)

Baskette explained, “God, apparently (pause) having better things to do, did not answer these prayers immediately. (PAUSE) Taking matters into my own hands, (pause) I juggled harder, danced faster, (pause) and tried to square the messy unfinished circle of life (pause) by taking my neat freak (pause) to new levels at home, the only space (pause) it seemed (pause) I could control.” (PAUSE)

Basketter continued, “Then Lent arrived, with its hard but rewarding spiritual disciplines. My 11-year-old daughter and I committed to meditate together daily. (PAUSE) Every morning, as I write this, we pull

kitchen chairs out from the table, point them toward the east-facing windows in our home, and sit side by side to watch the sun rise while we meditate for three minutes.” (PAUSE)

“Together, we inhale through our noses, and imagine God saying, ‘I love you.’ On the exhale, we reply back, silently, ‘I love you, God.’ (PAUSE)

Baskette elaborated, “It sounds lovely. But of course, (pause) my monkey mind goes crazy (pause) the second I sit down. I mentally order the day, write emails in my head, stave off the deeper feelings of despair (pause) with my calm efficiency. (PAUSE) Staring out the window, rather than wonder that the sun is coming up for the gajillionth time (pause) in bold defiance against the grief, trauma and entropy of modern life, (pause) all I can do is notice (pause) the fingerprints on the glass I have not cleaned since my two-year-old nephew visited last month. (PAUSE) I make a mental note to wash the window as soon as we’re done. (PAUSE)

My mini-me daughter (pause) notices them too. (PAUSE) When our meditation ends, (pause) she says, **‘Do you see those fingerprints on the window? (PAUSE) It’s like they’re saying: God is in the sun, and God is in the fingerprints. Because (pause) they belong to someone we love, who God made.’**” (PAUSE) (“*Fingerprints of God*” written by Molly Baskette posted on the UCC daily devotional on April 10, 2018)

As it had been for Molly Baskette and her daughter, (pause) life had been very messy for the original disciples before the resurrected Jesus made his appearance as described in our Gospel Lectionary Reading from Luke.

The disciples also experienced, like the Baskette family, a tragic death and tensions, which made every day a circus of struggle. (PAUSE) Then, as Molly’s daughter had noticed the fingerprints on the glass and interpreted them as if they were saying: “God is in the sun, and God is in the fingerprints,” so also the disciples’ experience with the Risen Jesus Christ led them to recognize the wounds they saw and his living presence with them demonstrated (pause) someone they loved was not only connected to

God but the expression of God's Forgiveness and a New Life and Relationship with our Divine Parent. (PAUSE)

After the Risen Lord showed them his wounds and ate fish in their presence to prove he was not a ghost, he went on to explain to them in verse 44, ***“These are the very things I told you about while I was still with you: everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the writings of the prophets, and the Psalms had to come true.”*** (PAUSE) Luke continued to report in verses 45-46, ***“Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘This is what is written: the Messiah must suffer and must rise from death three days later ...’”***

(PAUSE) What Jesus told them (pause) provided a basis for the disciples to better understand what had happened and what God was doing through the events surrounding Jesus' life, ministry, sufferings, death, and resurrection. Therefore, (pause) they were able to respond with new certainty about the Divine Parent's Agape – Suffering and Sacrificial Love for them and for all of humanity. (PAUSE)

So, the disciples were able to (pause) at least start (pause) to comprehend the joyous meaning of the appearance of their Risen Lord Jesus (pause) and then, (pause) they were open (pause) to both learn more of what God was doing through him and to receive from Jesus their call (pause) as he continued to explain to them in **verses 47-48**, *“and in his name the message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”* (PAUSE) Thus, with joy, the disciples and we are to get on with the Dance of the New Life in Jesus Christ (pause) coming with the strong assurance of God’s Great Agape Love for us and our Divine Parent’s Ultimate Victory over brokenness, death, and oppression! (PAUSE)

Marcia McFee, creator of the theme for our “Dare to Dance Again, from Mourning to Dancing”, says, “This Sunday acknowledges that sometimes we are unsure about our steps in this world. For the disciples, even ‘while in their joy’ at seeing Jesus post-resurrection, they were still ‘disbelieving and wondering.’” (PAUSE) McFee concluded, **“But 1 John reminds us**

that even though we may not know our next steps, we can be sure in them because we are ‘beloved,’ God’s children and ‘we will be like’ the one in whose steps we can surely follow — the resurrected Jesus.”

(PAUSE) The Scripture McFee was referencing comes from 1 John 3.

The author of that epistle or letter made it clear that followers of Jesus can be sure (pause) we are Agape Loved by God – we are God’s Children.

Specifically, John said about God’s Love for us and our relationship with the Divine Parent in verses 1-2a, ***“See how much the Father has loved us! (PAUSE) His love is so great that we are called God’s Children — and so, in fact, we are. (PAUSE) This is why the world does not know us: it has not known God. (PAUSE) My dear friends, we are now God’s Children ...”.*** (PAUSE)

The remainder of verse 2 affirms we are directly connected to Jesus Christ and we will follow his example or steps. John states, ***“But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is.”*** (PAUSE)

Paul Berge affirmed our close identification with Jesus Christ (pause) when he wrote, “Until the day of Christ’s coming (pause) we live in the faith that when Christ is revealed we shall be like him. (PAUSE) On that day (pause) we shall see him as he is (3:2). But until that day comes, we live in the confidence that is ours in Christ.” (PAUSE) Berge confirmed, **“This confidence empowers us to live in freedom in the world, free to live in love toward one another.** (PAUSE) The identity is a given. We are not only called “children of God,” but we are. (PAUSE) The identity is a bestowed identity by God, as Father. We are incorporated into the family of God. This identity is not something by which the world knows us, for the world stands apart from the one (pause) through whom this reality is established.” (PAUSE)

Berge asked, “What does this mean for the Christian community?

(PAUSE) Does this mean that we retreat from the world (pause) which does not know us and has little or no interest in us? (PAUSE) What is our identity in the world if we are unknown? (PAUSE)

Berge explained, “ ... **This is the identity of the child of God. It is an image that is as powerful as one could imagine (pause) and it is also an image that is as intimate and loving as one could imagine.**” (PAUSE)

Berge continued, “The church’s life in the world is as vulnerable and dangerous as the life of sheep in open pasture. But as sheep have a shepherd, the children have a Father. (PAUSE) This is the good news; this is the confidence that is ours in Christ. (PAUSE) The confidence is not based on a visible reality, but in the hiddenness of the cross — in the one whose life has been laid down — that we might live in confidence toward God.” (PAUSE)

Berge concluded, “**In this confidence (pause) we are called to live in the world, free to live for the other sheep (pause) who are not of the Father’s fold.**” (PAUSE) (1 John 3:1-2, “Confidence in Christ” section from “The Word of Life in the Witness of the Cross” by Paul S. Berge of Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota)

Rev. Dr. Guy Sayles discussed the implications of our “Dancing Sure” – having confidence (pause) because of our relationship with God and Jesus Christ. Sayles wrote, “To say that God is in the process of making us like Jesus Christ does not mean that God is cloning us into exact replicas of Jesus of Nazareth. (PAUSE) In fact, a wonderful and gracious paradox at the heart of the gospel is that the more we become like Jesus, the more we become our truest selves.” (PAUSE)

Sayles explained, “Jesus is the pattern and the power, the model and the source, of authentic human life. (PAUSE) **We are meant to have what he had and has:**

- * a radical and liberating faith in God;**
- * a childlike trust in the grace of God;**
- * a trembling wonder before the mystery of life;**
- * a durable hope that, because we are in God’s hands, death and sorrow and pain and tears are not the end, but joy and wholeness and laughter are;**
- * an astonishing confidence that we and the world are**

headed, not toward midnight, but toward sunrise; and

*** an undimmed awareness that the heart of all things is unconditional and compassionate love.” (PAUSE) (“We Will Be Like Jesus – 1 John 3:1-7” by Rev. Dr. Guy Sayles posted on <day1.org>)**

During this Eastertide, we have joy because God has proven the Divine Parent’s Agape Love for us is trustworthy and will ultimately defeat the powers of brokenness, evil, oppression, violence, and death. (PAUSE)

Further, we have confidence in God’s Forgiveness, Invitation, and

Welcome of all people into the New Relationship with God. So, (pause)

as God’s Children, who are so closely tied to the Divine Parent and the

Son of God, Jesus Christ, we are called to be sure footed as we live or

dance the New Life in Christ – the life of sharing God’s Agape Love and

Invitation with all people. **As we celebrate God’s Victory and Love on**

Easter, let us move forward boldly to put our “Joy” into action – to

“Dance Sure” – to follow Jesus’ example and teachings (pause) –

manifesting God’s Agape Love for all people! Amen.