

Thursday, February 23, 2017 - Day 53 – Numbers 12-14, Psalm 44, Luke 2

How many times have I feared to do the somewhat forbidding work ahead of me? I have known that it will be very beneficial, and yet I have dodged. How many times have I avoided doing the right thing, and later wished I had? The instances range from small to not-so-small, but I hope I am aware of every one of them.

My former EfM group still meets together monthly for friendship and for open discussion of a specific topics. And this very topic was discussed recently: why do we repeatedly fail to do the harder, but appropriate thing, and then repent?

I remembered aloud with the group my non-response to a situation that followed the public statement of Rodney King. He was severely beaten by L.A. Police after an alcohol-fueled high-speed chase, and the filmed beating was the nation's first video of police brutality. The officers were acquitted and the 1992 race riots of L.A. are linked to that acquittal. Rodney King made a public statement after the riots and asked the question, "Can't we all just get along?" Actually, he never said this, but the incorrect quote is the gist of his public statement and was widely quoted.

Soon after he made his public statement, I was driving through West Chester here in Chester County. On the low wall around the courthouse I saw a black woman sitting with a sign with Rodney King's supposed quote, a lone and silent protester. A block later, I wanted to go back and sit with her in solidarity. But also, I didn't want to. Why not? Difficulty parking? That was real. Would she think I was co-opting her protest? Did I not want to make a public statement myself? Well, I didn't do it, and I have remembered that with disappointment in myself ever since.

In our EfM group we went deeper than saying that it's just human nature to avoid and repent— too easy an answer, in the same way that saying sin in general is part of human nature is too superficial. We talked about the drive for approval, the lethargy which leads to the easier path, and so forth. It was a fruitful discussion.

The Israelites were afraid to fight the inhabitants of Canaan because they could be killed, and because their women and children could be captured as booty. Reason enough, don't you think? Would you invade to fight against an unknown force, to gain a homeland? The stakes were very high, and the stakes for me were laughably smaller. But there it lies. God was with the Israelites, no matter how much we dislike reading about the violent conquest of Canaan. And God was urging me on, though I didn't perceive it. But the Israelites had no trust in God and Moses, in spite of being liberated. I didn't trust my "impulse." When and where do you trust that God will help you do the harder things?

By The Rev. Joan Wylie