

**Trinity Church Wall Street 11:15am Holy Eucharist – Trinity Sunday**  
**The Rev. Kristin Kaulbach Miles Transcript**

**“Those Who Lose Their Lives Shall Find Them”**

“It is hard and beautiful work that we are anointed into: release, recovery, healing, freedom, the ability to see and understand, the ability to uphold societal justice and take on the ensuring sacrifice.”

Inspired by the writings of D. H. Lawrence, Barbara Brown Taylor, and the late Thích Nhất Hạnh, the Rev. Kristin Kaulbach Miles preaches this morning about the mysterious, life-giving “third thing” that springs from us and connects us beyond ourselves.

“To run from what hurts is natural; to face it is not. And yet that is where our true health lies,” writes Barbara Brown Taylor. “If we are able to turn toward the pain of the work, and let it do its work, the result may be hearts broken open to God and one another. Those who lose their lives shall find them.”

You can watch her sermon on our website now.

The readings are Nehemiah 8:1–3, 5–6, 8–10; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 12:12–31a; and Luke 4:14–21.

**Sermon Transcript:**

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. Amen. Please be seated.

It is wonderful to hear that reading about the body of Christ and to see your faces, to be with you. Part of this body of Christ, each of you members here this morning. One of you members actually gave me a book a few months ago which I recently completed, called *Why We Swim* by Bonnie Tsui. In this book, there was a quote that I want to share with you from the British writer and poet, D. H. Lawrence, who lived from about 1885-1930. It goes like this. Water is H<sub>2</sub>O, hydrogen, two parts, oxygen, one part. But there is also a third thing that makes it water and nobody knows what it is. Water is H-2O, two parts hydrogen, one part oxygen, but there is a third thing that makes it water. No one knows what it is. I think our scriptures today are about that third thing, the combination of elements that brings forth something bigger than ourselves and is life giving. Our spiritual ancestors we hear from today are gathered at the water gate after their return from captivity in Babylon. I may have asked, Ezra the priest to read the law of God. They do all the things of worship, just like we still do. They stand when Ezra opens the holy book, just as we stood for the gospel. They say Amen. They bow their heads. They lift their hands. Actually, just to get in the spirit of it, just going to connect with our spiritual ancestors. Let's do that together. First of all, it says at the water gate they say, amen, amen. Can we say it? Amen, amen. And then they lift their hands. And then they bow their heads. And then, and this would surprise you, they cry. Because when we gather and worship, a lot of what we carry in our bodies and in our hearts and in our minds surfaces, it comes out. And church should be a place where we can cry.

Maybe they cry because of those years when the Torah was lost to them. Maybe they cry because hearing these words of God, they realize how they are off the mark in loving God as our neighbor in ourselves. Maybe they cry because of all the loved ones who did not return with them, who are not with them, and they miss them. Maybe the cheers just flow as a response to the joy of being aware that this holy presence is in our life. So as you'll look upon these crying people and points to the third thing, "Go your way," he says, "Let this call forth a response." Send portions. He talks about the festivity, the fat, the sweet wine. Send portions, and listen to this, send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. This third thing connects us beyond ourselves to those for whom nothing is prepared. And at times in our life, that can be us. Paul's metaphor of connection is the body. "Now you are the body of Christ," he says to the people in Corinth. We gathered are the body in Christ. We become part of that body through baptism. And we swim in that love forever. All of us, we swim in that love forever. Paul rejects the metaphor of the body that was being used in his times. And we can see how that still is in our culture today. That those are at the top with the most status, are the ones most worthy. We hear this, "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be the weaker are indispensable. And those members of the body we think less honorable, we clothe with greater honor." So he rejects this idea that those in the highest parts can say to all of us in the lower parts, you should just take guidance from us.

You should all stay in your assigned stations. "No," Paul says, such a way of seeing people, of seeing reality is crusted over, is rigid. There is nothing alive about it. He says that to be part of serving God is to be defiant to a way of seeing the world that way. It's to be part of our ordinary lives to take that and to reject. And this is what Jesus has just done. Jesus had his baptism, the Holy Spirit was with him. Then assist Jesus goes out into the wilderness and he learns with the Holy Spirit what his mission is not about. His mission is not about being relevant. It's not about being spectacular. It's not about being powerful. That's what we may all think. He says, "No. No. No." That's not the mission. He learns that it's about using our self, our weakness, our ordinary lives to claim God's love. Luke and Paul both convey this and this is what we're all baptized into, that we are to become aware of our gifts as they are, as we are. That is the portion we give as Ezra says, that is the portion we share. That is the portion we offer to those for whom no one has prepared. Maybe it's the Gemini in me. I wonder if there's some other Gemini in the room, but I like the fact that there are multiple lists of gifts. There's multiple charism, talents. There's not one all encompassing list that we have to use to check off whether we have the right gifts, whether we're using them correctly, that we can fulfill some of them on any given lists or none of them because, as Paul says, "The greatest gift," he ends with serve the greatest gift. End of Chapter 12. And Chapter 13 is about love. It's not about defining ourselves. It's about the action of love. And rather than a list Jesus in this reading- and I see it's amazing our floral artist, Laura Long does these exegetical works with flowers- and I can see that Scott had said the bamboo was like the papyrus, the scroll that Jesus unfolds.

And rather than a list, Jesus calls us to these words of Isaiah. And Jesus calls himself to this mission. But all of us, and we see again, again in Luke, it's all of us said Isaiah is calling into this, all of us. In Luke, the Holy Spirit doesn't just come upon Jesus. Just like Paul, Luke focused on regular people where the Holy Spirit comes alive and not this spectacular, but in the quiet everyday ways. With a young Mary singing the Magnificat, with Simeon holding the baby, Jesus, with the shepherds quietly keeping watch. Only in Luke do these stories emerge, the story of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, illuminating themes of forgiveness and generosity. The third thing, that mystery third thing that emerges from our ascent to relationship. For Luke, Jesus's baptism has been anointing into his mission. And Paul reminds us that we too have that same anointing, that we are baptized into these beautiful words. I think it's

important for us to claim these. We are joining Jesus in this mission. So I invite you, if you're comfortable, to close your eyes and repeat these words after me, that this mission that Jesus is calling each one of us to. Repeat after me, after I say it, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me. The spirit of the lord is upon me. Because he has anointed me. Because he has anointed me. To bring good news to the poor. To bring good news to the poor. He has sent me. He has sent me. To proclaim release to the captives. To proclaim release to the captives. Recovery of sight to the blind. Recovery of sight to the blind. To let the oppressed go free. To let the oppressed go free. To bind the broken hearted. To bind the broken hearted. To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. It is hard and beautiful work that we are anointed into. Release, recovery, healing, freedom, the ability to see and understand, the ability to uphold societal justice and take on the ensuing sacrifice. And really, this is the talk about this Jubilee year every 50 years that we release all the debt.

Many scholars and historians think that that's really what got Jesus into trouble. Him claiming, let's wipe out the debt. There's sacrifice to taking on the societal issues. Release, ability to see, understand, freedom, recovery. This is gospel medicine. Barbara Brown Taylor titled one of her books, "Gospel Medicine." And in it she gives a beautiful description of this third thing, this life giving thing that springs from us. We are all tellers of the story that does not heal by taking away the pain, but by giving us a way to live with it, naming it, sharing it, enduring it. To run from what hurts is natural, to face it is not. And yet that is where our true health lies. If we are able to turn towards the pain of the work and let it do its work, the result may be hearts broken open to God and one another. Those who lose their lives shall find them. It's ordinary and it's a miracle when it happens. It's the Holy Spirit anointing us when we can face pain, our own and that of others. That's where the healing is. And one of the wisdom teachers for our time, Thích Nhất Hạnh has just died. He taught with such kindness and power how to be in this world. How to live like Jesus in healing and forgiveness and restoration and release one breath at a time. He has some wonderful books, pieces every step. One with, I think it's Daniel Berrigan about the raft is not the shore. Living Buddha, Living Christ. His most recent one is Zen and The Art of Saving the Planet. One breath at a time. We do this work. We take our place in this mission. Water is H<sub>2</sub>O, hydrogen two parts, oxygen one part, but there is also a third thing that makes it water. No one knows what it is. It's okay that this third thing is a mystery, which makes water, water. It flows through our parched and hardened ways of living. It's currents bring us to share our portion and to receive our portion. We are immersed in this love. And that is why we keep swimming.

Amen.