

(9th Sunday after Pentecost)

The Psalmist, Dr. Seuss and God

Psalm 34

"O taste and see that the Lord is good..."

"Green Eggs and Ham"

"I do not like them ANYWHERE! I do not like green eggs and ham! I do not like them, Sam-I-Am! You do not like them. So you say. Try them! Try them! And you may."

One of my favorite podcasts is NPR's – **This American Life** – hosted by *Ira Glass*.

I was listening to their show about babysitting. People, in this segment, children in particular, were sharing stories about tricks they played on their babysitters. One pair, a brother and sister, were giggling as the boy told about telling the babysitters his parents allowed him to go to bed wearing his clothes. The interviewer asked him if he liked going to bed with his clothes on? "No," said the boy. "Why did you tell them that," asked the interviewer? "Because," the boy said, "I don't like to change."

Who of us does like to change?

When I was serving in Indianapolis, I had a mother share with me about her middle school aged son's week at church camp. Laughing, she said she had packed his bag for camp. When he returned, his bag was still packed just as it had been when he left for camp. When she asked him about it, he said he wore his swim suit and the same t-shirt every day. His rationale? He figured he took his "bath" and washed his shirt when he went swimming in the lake! So he had no need to change!

What is your rationale for not changing?

Okay, most of us change our clothes, maybe even multiple times a day.

Changing clothes, but changing our minds and our worldview, that is much harder for us.

How we view the world and other people in it, compared to how we see ourselves in relation to them, is much more difficult to change. In part, because to make that type of change is about transformation of our heart, our mind, our souls, than simply swapping a dirty shirt for a clean one.

Transformational change challenges us. It is risky. It invites us to reconsider everything we ever believed and thought we knew about another person, people, country, culture, or religion, and to live into a new reality.

Transformational moments in this way, are less like Paul's experience on the road to Damascus and more like a glacier inching forward. It can be a very slow process.

Our human nature, while open to adapting in order to survive, really is resistant to change. To do so quickly, even suddenly, can be unnerving, creating uncertainty and some chaos in our lives as we try to adjust to the changes. So we settle into the flow of life and move comfortably along until something or someone invites/challenges us to make a change.

In 1972, Alka-Seltzer introduced us to the now often repeated phrase – “Try it! You’ll – like it!”

Twelve years before Alka Seltzer came up with the line, children were invited by *Sam-I-Am* to try it, “it” being “**Green Eggs and Ham.**” Try them they did!

How many of you have made or tried green eggs? If you tried them, did you like them? Did you need some Alka-Seltzer afterward?

I can think of a lot of things I have tried over my 57 years, but I do not think I have ever tried green eggs and ham?

As for green things, I did finally try asparagus after my sister-in-law, Becky, annoyingly bugged me about it. Much to my surprise, I liked it!

What foods did you finally try and like? Changing our diet can be a bit of a challenge as we seek to improve our health. Still, we all have our go-to “comfort foods” we love, and hate to have to give up. The same could be said about our unhealthy vices like smoking.

Making changes to our lifestyles, while very positive, are so hard for us to do.

The same can be said about our understanding of God, which influences our view of other people based on those beliefs. In the 1970’s there was a popular “Christianese” catchphrase – “God said it, I believe it, that settles it!”

Such a statement spouted by some was a push back against a changing world and Church. It became a safety net of sorts, giving some a mantra to spout when they were invited to consider God, Jesus and others in new ways they did not care to try.

Try it – “it” being contemporary music, guitar mass, new liturgy, new ways of serving communion, children in worship, or women as clergy.

I grew up on the northern cusp of the Bible Belt, in rural, southern Indiana. Through the lens of the bible I thought I knew, I believed I had a pretty firm understanding of the role of women in the church, and it was not in the pulpit!

You know, God has a funny sense of humor. “Try it. You’ll like it,” God sort of said. And here I am today, married to one of the best and brightest female ministers I know.

How did I come to a totally new understanding of the role of women in ministry and in the church? Love and Jesus. Yes, but also through two wonderful clergy mentors – Carol McDonald and Jill Hudson. In and through their leadership, guidance and supportive presence in my life and ministry, I began to change my beliefs.

How about you? Who has invited you to consider your beliefs in a new way?

We profess "God is love, and those who love, abide in God, God abides in them." (1 John). But do we really want to buy into God's unconditional love for "everyone" including "those" people? After all, we have held to our beliefs about them and in that way, God for a long time. Why change just because someone invites us to do so?

Like Sam-I-Am, Jesus was constantly, maybe even annoyingly so from the religious leaders perspective, inviting people to try God in new ways. Through his life, by his teachings, in his relationships with the outcasts, the vulnerable, the untouchables, the poor, and those whose lifestyles were considered taboo and sinful, Jesus was constantly inviting people to see God's sacred presence in and through them.

This is why he gave us a new command to love one another as he did. "Try it, you'll like it!"

As much as we affirm we have tried God's love in Christ, we are still at various levels resistant to it, especially when it comes to changing our long held beliefs as they relate to people who we see and judge as not being of "God" because they are "different".

Some people would say I am pretty liberal, progressive, even radical about my beliefs because I am open and supportive of my brothers and sisters who are immigrants, Muslim, or Gay and Lesbian. I wasn't always. I had that - "God said it, I believe it, that settles it" attitude. And then, God invited me to consider "those" people in new ways through my encounters with those very people.

The Rev. Ken Ehrke and the Rev. Howard Warren, both closeted gay clergy friends, who came out, suffering mightily for who God created them to be, showed me by their lives and ministry to others, the love of Christ.

As I have mentioned before, my beliefs about immigrants, immigration and the issue of sanctuary changed because of several Hispanic families who joined the Marshfield congregation. In and through them, I saw God's loving presence in new ways I had never thought to consider before.

There is a lot of change going on around us every day. We want to believe that God is the one thing that never changes. However, God does change, and the Bible is filled with examples of God doing just that, changing.

We could have a long biblical and theological study on the ever changing nature of God. We could talk about the places in the Scripture where God actually changes God's own mind.

If God can change God's way of being God in relation to the very world and people God created, why can't we as God's own people change our perspective about others and God?

The one thing that does not change about God is God's love for all people, and you and me.

Because of God's unconditional love, we are invited by Christ to change our worldview and perception of others, and begin to love one another as Jesus did.

The question is, will we be open to really trying God's love in new ways?

"Try it," Jesus says of God's love for others and for us, "you'll like it!"

So what's holding you back from giving it a try?