

When Pride Is A Virtue—Matthew 16: 25-26

(June 2, 2024-Pride Sunday/Second Sunday after Pentecost)

Happy Pride everyone! It's kind of ironic saying that in a church. Pride is one of the seven deadly sins. It's one of the criticisms of Pride celebrations by some Christians. But they miss the point of sin. Sin is whatever separates us from God. Pride, for the powerful certainly does just that. A prideful, powerful, person or people are indeed sinful because that kind of pride is all about self-satisfaction, separating from others, placing yourself or your people above others. Pride for the powerful is about failing to recognize our interdependence as creatures and our utter dependence on grace. Pride for the powerful is about shunting God to the side.

Pride in the powerful is the source of Kathy Khang's frustration from our [video](#)ⁱ this morning. One of the things I've learned from, as Kathy Khang says, listening and observing, using my ears and heart in opening myself to marginalized voices is to read scripture through the lens of power. To question who has the power in the scripture, how is it being used, who benefits and who is victimized by power? Who am I, who are we in the story because of the power I or my group holds?

One of those marginalized voices that I've been listening to is Rene August, a Black South African Anglican Priest. August did an analysis of Jesus in the New Testament and his relationship with power. She says, in every single interaction Jesus has, power always flows from the powerful to the powerless. He stops the stoning of a woman caught in adultery, he says 'let the little children come to me' because the kingdom of heaven belongs to those such as these, 'the last shall be first and the first shall be last', the beatitudes and of course our teaching for today—"For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

Today's scripture always brings to mind that quote by the British author, G.K. Chesterton, "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried."¹ If you hold power and want to know God, you must open yourself to the experiences and lives of the powerless. For the powerful the way to God is humility not pride.

For the excluded, the vilified, the judged, the victims of power, pride is the way to know, to draw closer to God. It is not a sin. Pride for the Queer community is the consciousness of one's own dignity², it is to refuse to be defined by the distortions of power. Pride for the Queer community is about claiming the long-denied image of God in which every Queer person is created. That is why the UCC, and our four churches are

¹ "What's Wrong With the World", part i, chap 5. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1717/1717-h/1717-h.htm#link2H_4_0006

² The Reverend Andrea L. Brennan, *Who Are We? Why Pride?*, 6 June 2021 https://www.christchurchfernieweb.ca/uploads/2/3/6/9/23694241/who_are_we__why_pride__sermon_for_pride_sunday_-_6_june_2021.pdf

proud to celebrate Pride. It is why we are pleased to welcome Victor Santiago to speak to us today.

Victor works for Family & Children's Services of the Waterloo Region as the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression Lead. His role is to ensure better outcomes for queer children, youth and families involved with child welfare in Waterloo Region. He was born in Venezuela, came to Canada at a young age and grew up in Toronto and Waterloo respectively. He speaks Spanish and French alongside English. He is involved in the community as a volunteer with Spectrum as well as ACCKWA and has represented Canada as a delegate at the UN ILGA conference for queer rights. In his personal life he is married to his husband, lives in Waterloo and they have two dogs, Heidi and Paco. As a practicing Christian he is passionate about advocating for the fact that faith and queerness do not have to be mutually exclusive to each other...

...Thank you, Victor, for your talk and the work you do. The teaching from scripture today, "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it", is spoken in the context of Peter urging Jesus not to take his message to Jerusalem, to a confrontation with the religious and political authorities. Jesus' teaching is a direct response to Peter who out of fear and concern for his friend wants Jesus to tone it down. Jesus says, "Peter, lose the life others want to impose you and find the life God wants for you." The Church has played a substantial role in imposing false live on the Queer community and suppressing the life God has given Queer people. That's why the church needs to celebrate Pride. We are grateful for those Queer Christians who have kept faith, not only with God but with the church, the Queer Christians who are helping the Church find our life. Thanks be to God.

Rev. Joe Gaspar

ⁱ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUdUGT--XJM>