

Mystic Congregational Church, UCC

Mystic, Connecticut

Sermon from December 6, 2009

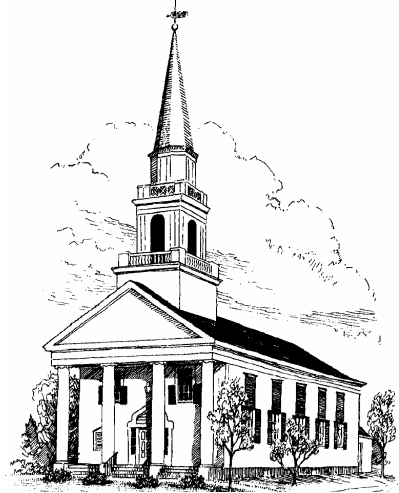
Rev. Ann M. Aaberg

“No Crashing Necessary”

Scriptures:

Malachi 3:1-4

Luke 3:1-6



“Who cares? Who cares?!” Now you know my occasional epithet hurled at the TV during morning news programming. Who cares? This week I found myself hurling it daily at the priority news coverage given to two stories: the questionable couple crashing the dinner at the White House and the household-name professional golfer crashing his car. Who cares?

With regard to the first, it appears that our culture may be in the midst of an epidemic of carefully crafted stunts designed to gain access to exclusive circles. One story maintains that the glamorous-looking couple who wedged their way in to the White House dinner last week were actually in the running for a spot on a new reality TV show based in Washington and were hotly seeking to secure it. Some similar rationale was applied to the hoax recently perpetrated by a father whose son had supposedly taken off in a balloon. A movie released several years ago entitled the *Wedding Crashers* was all about the clever strategies employed by two young men to do just that: to gain access to an event to which they were not invited.

Wedding crashers, gate crashers, party crashers—apparently there’s a whole lot of energy being expended these days to land in the limelight, to obtain nationwide, if not worldwide, attention, to get in to places and positions reserved for the very few.

Now tell that to the golfer who is already there, or to any person who lives in the media’s spotlight, whose every move is monitored, whose every sentence is dissected, whose clothing merits public thumbs-up or down, whose children are hounded, who never quite grow used to the sound of helicopters above their homes or the click of cameras every time they walk out of their doors.

One group is crashing to get in; another crashing to escape. And here *we* are watching it all on TV, listening to sports-talk radio, talking and blogging, joking and judging and wondering this morning if all this activity has any merit whatsoever.

Who cares? Well, perhaps we all should. Because there seems to be a common symptom pervading this cultural epidemic that all of us share at some level as humans, as children of God, and that’s our longing to be loved. Our longing to be not only accepted, but to be em-

braced. Our longing to be special, to be unique in someone's eyes. Our longing to be whole.

So we witness some actively seeking to trade their own reality for another, and who could blame them, really? Human reality can consist of things like getting up every day to go to a job you hate; or dealing with a child whose dilated pupils or slurred speech or failing grades or midnight excursions keep you up at night, feeling utterly powerless; suffering daily under the abuse of a parent or a spouse or an adult child; or taking that ride several times a week for dialysis or cancer treatment or to visit your daughter in prison.

And even if our own reality is not so bad, so many of us feel uncomfortable in our own skin; and with our noses pressed up to the glass of the rest of the world, we see greener grass, others who are connected when we're not, happier, richer, thinner, younger people, resulting in some of us going through excessive acrobatics to pretend to be someone else.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, this is today's wilderness. The evangelist Luke in this morning's gospel reading situates us in the reality of his time and writes: In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came. The word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

In the year 2009 approaching the second year of the presidency of Barack Obama, when Jodi Rell is governor of Connecticut and Rev. Geoffrey Black has just been installed as Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, when Meredith Vieira and Matt Lauer are the co-anchors of the Today Show, and Anderson Cooper broadcasts from CNN, the word of God is still coming. The people in the wilderness are longing for love and attention and celebrity status and easy fortunes and the word of God is still coming.

The word of God comes to us here now in this place today in our hearts, through the Holy Spirit however we may encounter it, saying prepare, because every valley, every low place in this world, in your life, will be filled and every mountain, all those things you look up to, will be made low, the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth; and ALL the flesh, ALL the people, every nation, every age shall see the salvation of God.

No crashing is necessary. Because Jesus, the son of God made flesh, entered through the gates of human reality willingly, became one of us, took on our reality and selflessly submitted to those who mistakenly took him for a crasher and proved through his Resurrection that all along, he was the host. He is the one who has set the table and has invited all to partake in his banquet. You don't need an ID. You don't need a special invitation. You don't have to pretend to be someone else. There is no Secret Service: in fact, even a traitor was fed at this table once. You don't have to lie about who you are to be included at the most precious, enlightening, embracing, forgiving, welcoming, loving supper there is.

This table, set by Jesus, who cares. Amen.