

Known, Named, and Unafraid

Excerpt from "A Way other than Our Own: Devotions for Lent" by Walter Brueggemann

"But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." – Isaiah 43:1

Being unafraid is an odd vocation; but it is the vocation of all those who have been baptized. We are different when baptized.

The Acts account of the early church says that the Spirit of God came upon the ones baptized, even as the Spirit came upon Jesus in baptism.

A lot of silliness is taught about the spirit coming in baptism. But what the Spirit does is visit our lives – our persons, our bodies, our imagination, our money – with the freedom of God, so that we are unafraid in the world, able to live differently, not needing to control, not needing to dominate, not needing to accumulate, not driven by anxiety.

The book of Acts is the study of the baptized ones the Spirit visits, the ones who are unafraid in the world. It says of that community of known, named, and unafraid people, that they "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6), or better to say, they turned the world right side up.

The truth is, frightened people will never turn the world, because they use too much energy on protection of self. It is the vocation of the baptized, the known and named and unafraid, to make the world whole:

- *The unafraid* are open to the neighbor, while the frightened are defending themselves from the neighbor.
- *The unafraid* are generous in the community, while the frightened, in their anxiety, must keep and store and accumulate, to make themselves safe.
- *The unafraid* commit acts of compassion and mercy, while the frightened do not notice those in need.
- *The unafraid* are committed to justice of the weak and the poor, while the frightened see them only as threats.
- *The unafraid* pray in the morning, care through the day, and rejoice at night in thanks and praise, while the frightened are endlessly restless and dissatisfied.

So dear people, each of you: Do not fear! I have called you by name; you are mine!

In a world of fear and anxiety, you empower us to live lives of wholeness, lives that make the world whole and turn it right side up. Embolden us as those who know that they are called by your name. Amen.