**Pentecost 12, August 31, 2014, Ex 3:1-15; Ps105; Rom 12:9-21; Matt 16:21-28; Rev. Mary S. Trainor**

There 10 month old Liam was sitting in his little blue chair with a white tray on top of the picnic table at our campsite in Glacier National Park. The picnic table had the most beautiful view, of a beautiful creek flowing with blue glacial flour and a mountain side inhabited by bighorn sheep and mountain goats. At the table with the beautiful view, Liam was making a mess, throwing food when he did not like what I was feeding him. Liam is my grandson. I had cared for Liam back in his home on numerous times the week before, so this was no big deal....until I found myself being corrected by his mother. She said, "mom - you need to keep an eye on him all the time when he is in that chair." You see, I had gotten up while feeding him to get something from the tent and I had spent time gazing at the scenery -- these were no, no's; Liam is wiggly and strong, and the potential for him to fall off the table is high. Needless to say, I my focus did not stray away from him after this-- in spite of the beautiful view. It matters what we set our minds on. I had my excuses for not keeping 100% of my focus on little Liam: stuff I needed and the beautiful view. But, my excuses were no good-Liam and only Liam needed to be my focus.

In our Gospel today, Jesus talks about where our minds are set. He speaks of this when He is speaking to Peter **"...*you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.*"** We understand, for we do this too; Peter was not unique in his setting his mind on things that were not of God. Today's Gospel occurs right after Peter had declared Jesus as the Christ, the anointed one of God, the Messiah. Then, Jesus said, "***You are Peter, and on this*** ***rock I will build my church***;" Peter was flying high with the responsibility Jesus had given him. And all of a sudden Jesus tells him that He would "***undergo great suffering...and be killed***." Whew! Peter's reaction was very human - it was one of denial and fear. Oh, Peter's motivation was honorable: love for God, but his actions did not honor God appropriately. Jesus did not like it, because Peter was not letting God be God. Peter was not being faithful to his calling to trust in God; Peter called Jesus, Lord, but he wasn't letting him be Lord.

We do a similar thing when we tell God in prayer we trust in Him and love Him, and then go about our lives with fear, anger or jealousy. When we set our minds on divine things, on God's way not our way, we see possibilities, we see hope, we see miracles that we could not see otherwise. When we set our minds on human things, our view is obscured by our focus on self--and so it is limited, smaller, short-sighted. The perspective God gives us when we set our minds on Him is supernatural. Jesus went on in this Gospel explaining "***those who lose their life for my sake will find it.***" We obtain this divine perspective when we put God as #1, when we move over and let God into the driver's seat of our lives.

In our Exodus reading this morning. we saw Moses challenged about whether his mind was set on divine or human things. He was tending sheep way out in the wilderness and the unexpected happened: an angel appeared, a bush burst into flames and the flames did not consume the bush, and God spoke to Moses out of the bush. This is the calling of Moses, when God gave him a new job to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Through this action, God is showing His compassion for His people and promises to deliver them from their oppression. How did Moses react? Effectively he said, "who me?" Moses gave a bunch of excuses, but God would not hear of them -- because God was going to accompany Moses, strengthen him, give him what he needed to accomplish this. Fortunately, in spite of his reservations, Moses was able to set his mind on divine things: he listened and obeyed God. Moses could have chosen to shut his mind off from God's power, and could have just kept on going and ignored the burning bush and God speaking. God allows us to ignore Him. We, like Moses and Peter, are called to set our minds on divine things.

The spiritual discipline of setting your mind on divine things allows you to go about your normal life, while at the same time seeing as you have never seen before. Just as God was able to put fire on the bush and not allow it to be consumed, God can reveal Himself to you in unusual ways, He can do the unexpected in your life, right in front of you! Our God is a God of hope who works in miraculous ways, who brings light into the darkness.   When we follow Jesus, we give up our ego to a larger identity--God's. This is what Jesus means when He says to "***lose their life for my sake will find it."*** As we grow in our Christian walk, loving God with our whole selves (Deut 6:5), we gradually are able to "***set our minds on divine things."*** As today's Psalm says, "***continually seek His face."*** Practicing this is a spiritual discipline, it is something we decide to do, it is a holy habit that we all can do, and one that gets easier and even automatic the more one does it--because God helps us. Peter learned this, Moses learned this, and so can we. Jesus is here, showing Himself to you -- no, not in a burning bush, but in the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist -- and also in many other forms as we experience God's creation and each other.

On my drive in the west, I saw a lot of billboards; two simple ones stood out, each of them said only two words, in simple writing. One said, "**be nice**" and the other said "**be patient**." These got my attention for two reasons: (1) the messages are simple, straightforward and good prompts; they served as reminders for me as I interacted with people along the way, (2) the billboards reminded me of Paul's advice in his letter to the Romans today. Here Paul gave us quite a long list of things we should do as we interact with each other: not only are we supposed to ***be sincere in caring for others, but we are to persevere in prayer, be patient in suffering, weep with those who weep, associate with the lowly, live in harmony, let God deal with vengeance, and overcome evil with good***. How do we do all of that? Sounds impossible, a lot harder than the two billboards. But it isn't, because God strengthens us, God gives us the ability to do these things -- if we let Him, if we set our minds on divine things, if we look to the Lord many times a day for strength, guidance, inspiration. Will you chose to set your mind on divine things?

Today and this week, spend time thinking about where you are setting your mind: on divine or human things. Setting your mind on divine things in this midst of life is a holy habit, one that we all can develop with God's help. And, the benefits of setting our minds on divine things are truly out of this world! Amen.