

Narrative Lectionary 4 – Luke 7

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Hamden

February 12, 2017

Where is the Messiah? Where the love is

Won't you join me in prayer:

(sing) Ubi Caritas et amor

Ubi Caritas, Deus Ibi Est

(speak) Wherever there is compassion and love,
Wherever there is compassion, there is God.

(Sing) Ubi Caritas et amor

Ubi Caritas, Deus Ibi Est

Amen.

On this grey and gloomy February morning

We gather here with John the Baptist.

Some of us, like John, are imprisoned -

But ours is not a prison with walls and bars

Ours is a prison of anger, fear, loss and anxiety.

(sing) Ubi Caritas et amor

Ubi Caritas, Deus Ibi Est

On this grey and gloomy February morning

We sit with John the Baptist

And some of us know about freedom

And not just physical freedom;

Ours is the freedom found in love, hope, joy, and compassion.

(sing.) Ubi Caritas et amor

Ubi Caritas, Deus Ibi Est

John asks:

“Where is the one of whom I preached?
Where is the one who will liberate the captives
And give sight to the blind?
I thought I saw him at the River Jordan
But these days I only hear rumors of liberation and freedom
From the tyrannical regime of the Romans.”

And so, those of us with joy and love and hope
Join John’s disciples and go out to find Jesus.
“We’ll be back,” we promise John and those who are in the darkness;
“We will bring you good news.”

And as we search for Jesus, we sing:

(sing together):

Ubi Caritas et amor

Ubi Caritas, Deus Ibi Est

(encourage people to hum as I continue speaking)

We start with the prison. Perhaps Jesus is here.

And of course he is; Jesus is always with those who are imprisoned.
He is here - with the children who were tried as adults
And will be here until they are twice as old as when they came in.
And just down the hall – Jesus is here, too -with the sociopaths
Who will be here for the rest of their lives.

(sing together) Ubi Caritas et amor

Ubi Caritas, Deus Ibi Est

(Keep humming!)

We take a bus to the inner city. Perhaps Jesus is here.

And of course he is; Jesus is always with people living in poverty.
And here he is: with the mothers who are working 3 jobs
so that their children can have clothes to wear to school.
And around the corner, he is here too - with the addicted mothers who don't have jobs
and are too high to know where their children are.

(sing together) Ubi Caritas et amor
Ubi Caritas, Deus Ibi Est

We take a taxi into the business district. Perhaps Jesus is here.
And of course he is; Jesus is always with those who are in power.
Here, in this concrete art-deco building - Jesus is with the corporate executives
who make sure that their employees are paid a fair wage, receive good benefits,
and have opportunities for advancement.
And he is here, too, in that shiny, metallic building – with the corporate executives
who care only about the bottom line and pleasing the stockholders,
no matter who gets hurt in the process.

(sing together) Ubi Caritas et amor
Ubi Caritas, Deus Ibi Est

On our way back to the prison, we stop by the community center. Perhaps Jesus is here.
And of course he is; Jesus is always with those who are rejected by others.
Jesus is here - with the people who are refugees, who have fled their violent homelands,
Hoping to find a better life in America.
And he is here, in the parking lot outside – with the ones who have no papers
Who have sacrificed everything to care for their families
and will do any work they can find.

(sing together) Ubi Caritas et amor
Ubi Caritas, Deus Ibi Est

And so we report back to John:

“We know that some say that we won’t know that Messiah is here
until there is world peace, and no one dies of hunger, and all people are free.

“But we have seen Jesus wherever we went –

In the midst of caring people and manipulative people,
Poor people and rich people,
Young people and old people,
Light-skinned people and people of color.

“Wherever we have gone,

We have seen people in need and people who help.
We have seen kindness win out over cruelty.
We have seen injustice create community.
We have seen deep and abiding love -
And we have felt it too.”

“John,” we say,

“You don’t have to be imprisoned by anger, fear, loss, and anxiety.
Jesus is here. In the midst of the best of us and the worst of us, Jesus is here.

“And somehow we know in the depths of our hearts

That Jesus will *always* be here –to love, redeem, and transform us all
With hope, a sense of humor, a desire to make a difference,
and a commitment not to leave anyone behind.

(sing together) Ubi Caritas et amor

Ubi Caritas, Deus Ibi Est

Amen!

The Rev. Dr. Daphne Burt

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