

**Don Brown
St Mary's SF
Epiphany 6 A
Feb. 12, 2017**

I had a clergy colleague who used to talk about getting an “earworm.” I thought this was some sort of disease. But as she explained, this is a piece of music that plays continually in your head and it just won't get out of your ear and brain.

Well I've had an earworm that invaded my brain soon after I learned that both Deb and Claire would be leaving St. Mary's and all of us; Deb is to become rector at Grace Church, Martinez, and Claire to become rector at Christ Church, Los Altos.

Here is my earworm: (Play Quincy Jones version... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pn9LPbFReQ>).

Now just in case you found yourself missing some of the lyrics:

Everything must change

**Nothing stays the same
Everyone must change
No one stays the same**

**The young become the old
And mysteries do unfold
Cause that's the way of time
Nothing and no one goes unchanged**

**There are not many things in life
You can be sure of
Except rain comes from the clouds
Sun lights up the sky
And hummingbirds do fly**

**Winter turns to spring
A wounded heart will heal
But never much too soon**

Yes everything must change

Everything must change. Most of us are not all that happy when change invades our lives, especially when it comes unbidden, and feels negative to the core. Yet, as the lyrics of this song affirm, change is built into the very fabric of life.

All of us know that our lives can take twists and turns we never anticipated. We have our future planned and then out of nowhere, bam, everything changes and what had been orderly and we think quite predictable, all of a sudden becomes disorderly and frighteningly unpredictable. I think we are seeing this played out in the political arena in a way none of us has ever experienced before and it's unnerving. Yet, as the song says, "everything must change."

My 18-year-old nephew, Mason Brown, who has been on the prayer list for several weeks now, was a passenger in a car with some friends. The driver of the car lost control, Mason's body was slammed by a light pole, he suffered a severe trauma to his brain, and he became mostly unresponsive. Now, finally, while he cannot talk, he at least can give a thumbs up sign, and there is hope and a sign that healing has begun. "Everything must change"

How we respond to the chances and changes in life is of utmost importance, especially in turbulent and unstable times. In this regard, we've heard some important news in these morning's scripture readings.

In the lesson we heard read from the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses says to the people of Israel, you have a choice to make...listen to God and choose life, or go your own way and choose death.

St. Paul takes the Corinthians to task for their quarrels and jockeying for position and status, and counsels that they are to work together for the good purposes of God. Again, the message is make the right choice about how you are going to relate to one another.

Finally, we hear from Jesus some stern words that choosing wisely involves more than just following the rules. He makes them even more impactful.

It's not enough that we refrain from committing murder, we must treat each other with respect and that means not speaking hateful words.

More than avoiding committing adultery, we are not to objectify other persons by lusting after them.

It's not enough to follow the letter of the law regarding divorce...the point is to not treat others as disposable and we are to make sure that the vulnerable, in Jesus' day, women and children, are taken care of by us. As I prayed about this part of Jesus' teaching, I thought of all the refugees throughout the world and homeless people in our own community.....what do you think Jesus would have us do?

Moving on to the next point Jesus makes...Jesus tells us more than not lying or being false with others, we need to speak and act truthfully so that our "yes" means "yes" and our "no" means "no."

All the hyperbole and exaggerated language about cutting off body parts and being cast into hell is meant to convey how important our relationships to each are to God. It's not just enough to follow the letter of the law in the Bible; it's the spirit of the law that matters most. Or to put it more bluntly, a person can follow all the rules and still be disgustingly evil, nasty and mean-spirited.

Moses, Paul, and Jesus, each urge us to choose the spirit of the law, which is love, which is life. In our relationship with ourselves and with others, it is love that counts above all. And love, in the biblical sense, is the will and behavior that seeks the best for others. God cares deeply and passionately about how we treat others and how we treat ourselves. This is why when

Jesus was asked what is the most important law, he said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind AND love your neighbor as yourself.”

Life is full of trials and tribulations, and especially when change comes, when the future looks unsure, we may get anxious; but if we personally anchor ourselves in the love of God, even as life sends change our way, we can navigate that change, knowing that no matter what, we are loved and God in Christ is with us.

St. Mary’s has journeyed through some major changes in the last year and a half and now comes another change as we wish Claire and Deb well as they begin their new ministries. We send them off with our love and our gratitude.

I know some of you are concerned about what happens next in this cycle of change that has been part and parcel of St Mary’s congregational life for 126 years. Well, I’m interviewing possible clergy to assist us in moving forward, and I’ve consulted with the vestry regarding next steps, and I am confident that we will find appropriate clergy to work with our deacons and me.

Yes, everything and every one does change, but thanks be to God that our task remains the same as it has always been: to choose life, to live in God’s love, and bring that love to the world around us in word and deed. Let it be so for St. Mary’s and for each and every one of us. AMEN

