

My first day back at work this week was a very busy one, so I was kind of bushed driving home to Waldoboro. After navigating the endless road construction on I-90, I finally reached Moody's Diner and turned onto my road—Washington Road, aka route 220.

As I wound around the first corner, I noticed this guy in a black car right on my tail. The road speed there is 35, and I was doing 40. All right—42. I know—I am a WILD WOMAN.

We very quickly got to the place where the speed limit is 45—and I sped up to 50. He is still right on my bumper. Before it even is safe to pass me—he races by me and flies down the road. I'm pretty sure he's going 65 or faster. It annoyed me a bit—because for heaven's sake, I was hardly doddering.

I muttered to myself: "Please let there be a police officer ahead, please God, let there be a police car ahead. I think I said it about 5 times in a row as I passed the three cemeteries on my right. We get to the straightaway and I can see him way ahead. And a police officer puts his lights on, makes a U-turn and pulls him over—in front of my house!!!!

I was not very restrained in my whooping and hollering in the car. I was so happy! I mean, really—how often does this happen—that we see someone wantonly break the law, putting people in danger—and the police are actually there to clap them with the irons of justice.

I think that's what I was whooping in the car: JUSTICE!!!! Justice, justice! Yes.

And look at that-- today we have a Gospel reading about justice. Now—some would say it's about perseverance, and that is true—but it is perseverance about justice.

After all, Jesus isn't using an example like: "there once was a disciple who really wanted a new....donkey....so he kept praying, 'Lord, lord, please, please, please send me a new donkey!'" And he persevered and he persevered, and the Lord gave it to him.

No—this is about wanting, not a "thing", but an ideal: justice. Jesus describes a woman who just wants to be heard, trying to get someone who doesn't care at all to listen to her plea. Since women—especially widows—were not exactly treated with respect at this time in history, it was probably a desire that was doomed to failure. Except that her persistence paid off.

My wife has a tattoo on her left arm that says "nevertheless, she persisted."

This sentiment was very popular a few years ago, thanks to Mitch McConnell tried to silence Elizabeth Warren from speaking during a confirmation hearing. He called for a vote to silence her, but she kept on speaking. "Nevertheless, she persisted," he said snidely.

Of course his statement went viral on the internet, and has been taken up by women to encourage each other to keep persisting in breaking barriers and sticking up for justice, even when others try to silence them or ignore them.

So persistence is key. But it's also important to use our persistence well. And this goes for all of us—not just women, not even just adults, so you kids listen in, too.

It is never wrong to persist in speaking out for justice.

It is never wrong to speak out when we, or someone else, is being treated as “less than”—or when some have justice when others do not.

Some will say I am making this a political sermon. I will persist in saying that I am not.

I AM speaking about our baptismal vows where we vow to “strive for justice and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being.”

And I AM concerned that we are entering a dangerous time in our country: a time when people are less important than philosophies or stances. When how we treat each other is less important than our desire to control each other.

As a country, we are becoming increasingly obsessed with restrictive ideas and polarizing rhetoric, than we are with seeing each other as human beings, each of us as worthy as the other. Consequently, the real need, concerns and justice for all people are falling through the cracks.

We live in a nation where we say we believe in freedom and justice for all. Many of us worry when we see freedom and justice take a back seat to power and hate.

But listen to Jesus.

- Persist in speaking up when you see injustice. God does hear and answer us.
- Persist in striving for peace and justice among all people – however that enters your life, and whatever that looks like.

And don't forget the most important law that undergirds everything we do as followers of Christ. The law that is now to be “written on our hearts.” It is the law that undergirds our faith. We all know it. Love God and love everyone.

This is a “stance” that Christendom has never seriously attempted. Just take a look at our world history, and our current planetwide strife. How many people do we really see loving God and loving everyone they meet?

But it's important to persist. Because if we do, it can change the world. We can change those who don't fear God, and don't much love anyone else either. I know that's hard to believe, but Jesus promises it. We just need to be brave enough—and countercultural enough, to attempt it.

Let others say of those of us who follow Jesus:

“My word, they love even against all odds. No matter what happens, nevertheless, they persist.”
Amen.