

# Becoming Our Size

*A sermon by The Rev. Daniel Simons  
at St. Paul's on the Green, Norwalk, CT*

PRIDE SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 2026

READINGS: JEREMIAH 1:4-10 · PSALM 139 · 1 JOHN 3:1-3 · MATTHEW 5:14-16

In the name of the one who names us  
and claims us  
and sustains us all.  
Amen.

*You are the light of the world.  
So let your light shine before others.*

Jesus says this like he's talking to people who are hiding.  
People living smaller than they could be.  
People who don't yet know who they really are.

And he says it like the thing we do by default makes no sense at all.

*No one lights a lamp,  
and then goes looking for a basket to put over it.*

Think about how absurd that is.  
You don't kindle a fire,  
and then spend the evening  
hunting for something to smother it with.

And yet we are experts at smothering the fire.

I learned that from the inside.  
From living for decades in my own skin —  
but not my own size.

Being gay,  
in the heartland of America,  
was not safe.  
Often it still isn't.

My little child-brain somehow knew that,  
long before I knew what the word even meant.

I figured it out fast at school.

And even at church —  
where I thought I was utterly safe,  
where I sang *This Little Light of Mine* with happy abandon —  
I somehow knew that coloring outside the lines was not okay.  
That the safest thing was to stay small.  
Small enough that whatever was different in me would go undetected.

It went on like that through seminary,  
and even into my first years of ordination.  
The Episcopal Church was a different place then.  
I could barely let anyone know what I knew about myself.

And that worked,  
for awhile.

And it cost something too.  
Far more than what I knew I was paying.

I was living my whole life under a bucket.  
And I had no idea what my true size was.

Now —  
this sermon is not about being gay.  
I'm just rooting it where I've lived it.

It's about coming out.  
Which is something every single one of us has to do.

All of us carry parts of ourselves we've folded away.  
Identities we've taken on  
that stunt our growth and hide our fullness —  
because it's safer,  
because it gets us ahead,  
because it gets the applause,  
because it doesn't rock the boat,  
because it keeps us comfortably inside the culture of nice.

And sometimes,  
yes,  
it is necessary,  
to stay safe.

It is not safe to say what you know or share all of who you are.

But more often we stay safe  
at a time when we could be brave.  
We keep hiding long past the point it is truly protecting us.

And it costs us.  
And it robs the world of what we were given to give.  
And it is rooted in fear, the opposite of Love.

And it is absurd.  
No one lights a lamp and then looks for a basket to cover it.

Let your lives shine.

When we celebrate Pride,  
it's worth defining our terms.  
Pride is, after all,  
listed as the first of the seven deadly sins.

But pride,  
in the sense we mean it today,  
is not about arrogance,  
It is about living without the need to hide.  
It is living your true size.  
It is standing up and saying:  
I will not make myself small,  
because who I am at the core is Good.  
It is claiming our **belovedness**.

And that is far more than self-realization.  
This is a theological claim.

God don't make junk.

Who you are —  
in all your diverse, raw, quirky particularity —  
is the good raw material God crafts a life out of.  
Living into your true size  
is the work of growing into the likeness of God.

And that work belongs to everyone in this room.

I remember when we first started sharing the sermon  
at the Wednesday Eucharist.  
I don't preach a sermon there,  
I ask for people's response to the readings.  
It was such a struggle at first to get anyone to say anything.  
We were all like Jeremiah in the first reading:  
Who am I?! I'm only a kid. What do I know?

Now it's hard to stop the fire that gets lit every week!  
As we take the risk of giving voice to what stirs within us  
We're all growing into our true size.

Now, some people are bigger than their size.  
They inflate themselves,  
take up all the oxygen in the room,  
which is really just the same condition  
as those of us who shrink back:

We don't trust that at our core,  
our soft core,  
without makeup,  
without props,  
we are enough,  
and more than enough.

Today we stand in solidarity with people  
the church as well as society has so often vilified the most —  
people still called disordered and depraved  
across most of the churches of the world.  
The truest solidarity  
is doing the same brave work of coming out ourselves.  
Discovering that when we are our own size  
God's image shines out with stunning clarity.

Howard Thurman saw this almost a hundred years ago.

Thurman,

who laid the groundwork for the civil rights movement,  
taught that when a person  
especially when they are hunted, dispossessed  
can easily fall victim to the inner survival reflexes  
of fear, hate, and deception.

Life under a bushel.

BUT: if they can truly know they are a beloved child of God,  
exactly as they are,  
something breaks open.

A power is released that the empire cannot control or snuff out.

Not because they made themselves beloved.

They always were.

But because they can finally stand up inside it.

And Thurman was only repeating Jesus  
who as a Mediterranean peasant non-citizen  
was speaking from inside this experience  
of being dispossessed, and of being Beloved.

Successful transformational movements of every time and place  
have at their core some version of this “coming out.”

But hear this.  
You can join a movement and still not have come out.  
You can march and still be hiding.  
Because unless you know —  
all the way down —  
that you are a beloved child of God,  
and so is everyone else,  
especially the one you'd call your enemy,  
then all we ever do is trade places.  
Dominating,  
or cowering.

And that is not the way.

There is an image  
at the very beginning of the Bible  
that I just love.

God and the first humans,  
walking together in the garden,  
in the cool of the day.  
Naked and unashamed.  
Exactly their size.

And then one evening God comes for the usual walk —  
and they aren't there.  
They're crouched in the bushes,  
suddenly ashamed,  
covering themselves.  
And God calls into the trees:  
Where are you?  
Who told you that you were naked?

As if to say:  
this is absurd.

Come out.

Come walk with me.

Ever since,  
we have been trying to find our way back to that garden —  
usually by every complicated and exhausting route  
except the simple one.

When the way back was always just this:  
come out from your hiding place.

Coming out of hiding is the work of becoming truly human.

So:  
Happy Pride!

Or —  
Happy Coming Out,  
from wherever it is we have been hiding.

Our true size is just waiting to be discovered.