

Isaiah 7:10-16
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25

Sermon December 22nd, 2019

God Helps Us Make Sense of Our Messiness

The moment one decides to have children is the day they give up their dream to live in a clean house. Toys on the floor. Clothes on the floor. Leftover food and wrappers on the floor. Paper clippings on the floor. Crayon scribbles on the walls. Juice stains on the furniture or carpet. Of course, most parents try to clean up after their children, or teach their children to clean up after themselves. We try. But, as we find out our children don't always listen no matter what consequences we throw their way. So, to keep the house clean all the time, we have to be following our children around the house for most of the day picking up after them. Sweep the floor five times a day. Do a toy pick up every half hour. Vacuum at least twice a day. Give the walls a wash once a day. Remove five to ten stains a day. Totally realistic goals to fulfill right? It is not like we have anything else to do.

If you ever wonder why it is better to call ahead when visiting a young family then show up at the door, this is why. We need time to clean. Every time we host someone at our house it is at least a 24-hour slot dedicated to getting the house in order. The moment we decide to have children is the moment we give up our dream to have a nice clean house. At least before they become teenagers. After that we are able to generally keep their messes to their bedrooms so we can just close the door if we don't want to see the mess.

Like the look of our houses when we have little ones living there or even visiting there, life can be messy. Sometimes our messes are self-inflicted like when our children leave toys all over the floor. For example, you say or do something hurtful to someone you love that then turns the relationship upside down leaving you with this big mess to try and clean up.

Sometimes our messes are the result of some outside factor. For example, you lose your job in the midst of an economic downturn. Wrestling to figure out how you are going to pay the bills. Or you find out you are terminally ill, and now are dealing with grief. Working hard to get your affairs in order. Coping with all the side effects you get from the different medications you are dealing with. Or you are grieving the death of a loved one, and now have to figure out how to put the pieces of your life back together. Or your adult child's mess becomes your mess as they expect you to clean it up for them. Like you often did when they were little.

Life can be messy. For Joseph and Mary life becomes messy the moment Mary becomes pregnant. For Joseph, he is in love with Mary and looking forward to their life together. Then he finds out she has been unfaithful, or so it seems. Joseph's life is flipped upside down as his future becomes unknown.

For Mary, she carries the burden of being pregnant outside of being married to Joseph. Mary knows that it is through the Holy Spirit that she is with child. Mary knows that she has been faithful. But she also knows that Joseph, her parents, and anyone else in her life will not understand this. She will probably face death if Joseph breaks off the engagement publicly. Her parents will be so disappointed in her. Her friends will shun her. Mary's life is flipped upside down as her whole social support system is in jeopardy.

When we face messiness in life, sometimes like the A personality type parent who spends most of their day cleaning up after their children, we too get organized, create a plan, and deal with the messiness in our lives. Whether it is apologizing for our wrong doing, and working at doing better. Or finding support to help us in our grief or in our illness or in our time of unemployment. Or setting healthy boundaries so we can better support our adult children, encouraging them/helping them to clean up their own messes.

Sometimes like a parent who gets so overwhelmed that they stop trying to clean up the mess or just start screaming for some relief, we panic. We react instead of taking time to think through our options before deciding on the best way to clean up the current mess we are facing. If it is even possible to clean the mess all up. Some messes leave permanent stains behind. Sometimes we need to find coping strategies to live within the messiness. Not everything is fixable.

For Joseph, without really giving Mary a chance to explain what happened he is ready to break off the engagement. Joseph is hurt. Now after some reflection Joseph realizes that if he breaks off the engagement he will do it secretly, because he still cares for Mary's well being. He doesn't want her to be stoned to death. Yet, he is still ending the relationship. Even when Mary has done nothing wrong.

So, sometimes we deal with our messiness by taking time to pray and reflect on how to deal with the mess. And sometimes, we react. We panic. Maybe leading to a bigger mess.

Well, as Joseph and Mary are facing this big mess in their lives, God comes to Joseph in a dream and reassures him that everything is going to be alright. God helps Joseph make sense of his mess, and invites him to trust in what God will do to turn this mess into something redeemable. The birth of a savior. In Luke's gospel we see God react to Mary in a similar light.

In the creation story, God brings darkness, chaos into order. Or in other words, God cleans up God's house. Wherever we face messes, God is there offering to help us make sense of our mess. Helping us pick up all the toys, paper clippings, food, and wrappers from the floors of our lives. Helping us remove the stains within. Washing those scribbles off our walls.

God helps us make sense of our messiness, and brings order to our lives. As we prepare our hearts for Christmas. As we lit the candle of love this morning. We remember that God sends Jesus into our lives in the midst of our messiness to reflect God's hope and love for us and our world. To offer us salvation. Or in other words, to walk with us as we face the messiness in our lives giving us what we need to clean up this mess or at least live a life reflecting God's love and grace in the midst of this mess.

Let us pray, loving God, sometimes our lives are so messy that we have trouble seeing you. Sometimes we get so exhausted trying to clean up these messes. Please give us hope that you are there with us as we live in the messiness of life helping us make sense of it. Breathing new life into us. Helping us pick up the toys off the floors in our lives. Making us clean. **Amen.**

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