

Sermon June 14th, 2020

God Nurtures Us

God sends people into our lives to nurture us into becoming the people God has created us to be. People who speak and act out of love for God and for one another.

We see this sending in our story of Exodus where Moses is sent to help guide and mentor Israel into becoming a holy people. People who love God with their whole heart and mind, and love their neighbors as themselves. A little further in this story God will send Moses down the mountain with Commandments that will teach the people how to live out this love in their communities.

We see this sending in our reading of Romans where Paul is sent to the Gentile Christian communities to guide and mentor them into living their lives with love for God and for one another. Pointing them to the example that Jesus set for those who choose to follow him.

We see this sending in our gospel where Jesus is sent to us to teach us through his words and actions how to love God and one another. Or in other words, how to live out what Jesus called “the Kingdom of heaven” in our world.

Jesus initiates this teaching by first inviting a small group of people to follow him more intimately. Jesus invests three years, day and night, to teach them how to live out the kingdom of heaven. How to love God and people in the way we are created to love?

Jesus mentors his followers through acts of love in their presence. Healing the sick. Cleansing those who suffer from spiritual unwellness. Feeding those living in poverty with food and hope. Welcoming the marginalized. The rejected. Challenging those who are acting in oppressive ways. Calming the storm.

Jesus mentors his followers through his words of love. Teaching them through sermons about standing up for the marginalized, showing hospitality to others, and taking time to nurture one’s relationship with God.

Jesus then sends them out to all the towns and villages in Israel to live out what they have learned. Supporting them along the way by reassuring

them that Jesus has taught them everything they need to know. Promising them that God will give them the words that they need to say and the actions they need to perform to help them when they face resistance. Inhospitality.

After Jesus's ascension into heaven when his followers receive the Holy Spirit on Pentecost they carry on Jesus's teachings, guiding others on how to be the people God created them to be. How to live out the kingdom of heaven in their communities. Loving God and loving one another. Some of these followers shared stories of what they witnessed, which led to the penning of the four gospels and the early Christian writings that we continue to look to for guidance today.

Through out the generations God has sent us leaders in every faith tradition to teach and guide us into being the people God created us to be. Loving God and loving one another. God has equipped these leaders with tools like sacred scriptures, wisdom literature of past generations (like the Augsburg Confessions), worship, and prayer to help in teaching and guiding us.

So, God sends us prophets, a messiah, faith leaders to nurture us into the people God created us to be. To live our lives loving God and one another.

God also sends us people like our parents, siblings, other family, friends, our brothers and sisters in Christ, teachers, mentors, and even the stranger to help us be the people God created us to be. Loving God and loving one another.

In every faith story I hear about from those I minister to; I hear about someone's aunt or close friend or parent or grandparent or teacher who was a good example for them of someone who lived their life loving God and loving one another. Someone they were inspired to follow.

Sometimes this person is a stranger who comes into our lives for just a moment, but impacts us in such a profound way. Inspiring us to love others in ways we never thought were possible. Leaving us thinking "did I just encounter an angel?"

God nurtures us throughout our lives. Teaching us. Guiding us. Mentoring us. Helping us grow into the loving people God created us to be. Yet, we

come across times in our lives where we are challenged to learn and grow. Challenged to love God and one another.

When Jesus sends the disciples out to imitate Jesus. Jesus doesn't do so blindly. Jesus prepares us for the challenges we may face along the way. Not everyone will receive our loving message with hospitality. Some people will be unable to hear a message that invites them to love God and their neighbors.

Some people carry with them very deep wounds. Feeling so hurt that they struggle to see a loving God. When they hear this invitation to love God and love their neighbor, they can't resonate with it. They haven't been able to feel God's love in their lives. So, they don't know how to reciprocate this love. Often times their wounds leave them frustrated and angry, making it harder for them to love others.

Sometimes as believers we feel this way when hurt. We find it hard to stay faithful in the midst of our suffering. We find it hard to love God and one another when we experience moments where we don't feel loved.

Sometimes we struggle to love one another, because we have heard negative things about each other on social media or the news or from people who are trying to spread hateful messages. Sometimes we struggle to love one another, because we disagree on the little details of who God is and what God has created us to be. Sometimes we struggle to love one another, because we are too worried about our own well-being. Preventing us from being generous with one another.

As Jesus says, the road will not be easy. We will run into some bumps and roadblocks along the way as we try to be the people God created us to be. Loving God and one another.

However, in the midst of these challenges we face, to love as God loves, Jesus reassures us that God will be present with us as we face these hardships. God will give us what we need to walk through this suffering. To keep loving in the ways God created us to love.

God will keep sending people into our lives to help us love. If our parents are unable to teach us how to love. A teacher or a friend may show up in our life to help us. If not a teacher or friend. A faith leader. If not a faith leader. A stranger.

When I have doubted or struggled to love in the way God created me to love, I am pleasantly surprised when God sends someone into my life to help me love again. Every time.

God hasn't given up on us now as we walk through this pandemic. Instead, when we get angry. When we doubt. When we start hating each other. When we get impatient. When we feel unloved. God sends people into our lives to help us feel loved and to help us love again. God points us to the gospels where our hearts are redirected to see the love of God in Christ Jesus that we all have inherited. A love that welcomes us as we are with all our wounds. A love that liberates us. A love that raises us up, and reconnects us with the person we have been created to be. Loving God and loving one another.

Let us pray, loving God we give thanks that you sent your Son to show us how to love you and one another. When our suffering becomes overwhelming for us please don't give up on us. Send people into our lives to help us reconnect with your invitation to love. When misinformation and hateful messages distort our thinking, point us to your gospel where you teach us to be the hospitable loving people you created us to be. Your gospel where your Son revealed just how much you love us. **Amen.**

© copyright, 2020, Wallace Bornhuse. All rights reserved.