

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Psalm 111

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Mark 1:21-28

Sermon January 28th, 2024

Jesus Breathes New Life into Us

When something breaks down in our house like an appliance or a piece of furniture our first thought is that we try and fix it ourselves. Then when the duct tape weakens, and it breaks down again, we try and fix it again (**Image One**: roll of duct tape). We keep trying to fix it until we are ready to come to the realization that maybe, just maybe, it is time to replace it with something new. Our loved ones have been telling us this for quite a while. Especially after the tenth round of duct tape (**Image One**). But we need to get to that place ourselves where we are finally ready to replace it.

Another example that comes to mind for me is when our loved ones keep wearing that tattered underwear week after week. Even with how holy it is getting. We keep telling them to buy new underwear, but they don't want to waste the money. Or they have better things to do than to go to a department store to pick up more underwear. That can take a whole fifteen minutes out of their day. As long as there is still thread left, it is all good.

Similarly, as the church, we can keep a ministry going and going and going even if we see signs that it might be time to try something new (**Image One**). Because, we like the nostalgia that comes from keeping this ministry around. Or we feel that it will cost too much to do something new. Or the very idea of doing something new gives us anxiety, because of all the uncertainty. We know that what we are doing now worked before, and so why can't it work again?

Similarly, as the institutional church, we keep running the church in a certain way even though we are seeing signs that it might be time to try something new (**Image One**). Because we are comfortable in continuing to be the church in this way. Because we know what we are doing in running the church in this way. Any new way of being the church in the world comes with a lot of uncertainty.

Well, in our gospel, the crowds witness one of Jesus' many out of this world actions, miracles that liberate someone from their suffering. And come to the conclusion that Jesus is teaching the people something new (**Image two**: something that looks new). Something different from what they are used to. Something that is breathing new life into the people.

Unfortunately, the way the religious order is currently running things isn't working so well for a lot of people (**Image One**). Their hearts are ready to hear a new message. A

fresh perspective. And because of this, Jesus' message is attractive to many living in Galilee (**Image Two**).

And yet, there are others who want to keep wearing the tattered underwear. There are others who want to keep fixing the couch with layers and layers of duct tape (**Image One**). There are others who want to keep running the institution the way they know how. Because it works for them, or it has worked in the past, so why wouldn't it work again with a few tweaks here and there?

These people challenge Jesus. They push back against any new message he is trying to teach. They are not ready or even willing to hear his message. Instead, they spend their time finding a way to trap Jesus so to silence him from trying to change things.

For the Prophets, God gives them a fresh perspective, a new teaching, to share with God's people (**Image Two**). Some listen, and embrace the change ahead. Others challenge the prophets. Others struggle to hear the new teaching, the fresh perspective the prophets carry with them (**Image One**). And so, try and silence them.

For Paul, he is offering a fresh perspective on how we are to live in unity with one another as Christians. The church has its roots in Jerusalem and Galilee. So, first generation Christians more than likely come from Judean roots. Though some may have come from Samaritan roots. But as the church spreads across Asia minor, Gentiles start to join the community. People need to hear a new teaching on how to live together as one Christian community. How to keep loving one another as their communities become more diverse (**Image Two**).

Many people listen to Paul, and start to work towards unity in the church. Others struggle to accept the Gentiles or the Judeans, and push back against Paul (**Image One**).

In the Reformation, we see a similar situation to first century Christianity, where the way the religious institution is being run isn't working for a lot of people. So, the Reformers bring forward a fresh perspective. A new teaching. That is attractive to many (**Image Two**).

Like Jesus, like Paul, the Reformers too face a lot of push back as they try to change things for the better (**Image One**). Unfortunately, some people are benefitting off the current system, and didn't want things to change. So, they try and silence the Reformers.

Fast forward to today, and we see that the church in North America is struggling in the 21st century. We are longing for Jesus to give us a new teaching, a new perspective (**Image Two**). And though these movements are starting to happen, many people continue to hold on to how we currently run the church (**Image One**). How we currently be the church in the world. Many people show resistance to these movements, as it

threatens their feelings of nostalgia or it challenges them to spend more money than they are comfortable spending or the anxiety they are feeling from the uncertainty that comes with change pushes them too far outside their comfort zone, or they are benefiting in some way from the way things are currently run.

But as we see from our past history, as we see in the gospels, in the Prophets, in Paul's letters, when we start struggling as a church, when we start struggling as God's community, Jesus breathes on us a fresh perspective, a new teaching, new life (**Image Two**). To help us continue to be the church in the world in a changing context. We see that after a period of time we finally do get it. We are finally ready to follow Jesus into this unknown future trusting that Christ will make things new. And that this will be good for us.

Let us pray, gracious God, we pray for our church as we discern how to be the church in our 21st century context. Open our ears and our hearts to hear your fresh perspective, your new teaching. Breathe new life into us through this teaching. So, we can continue being your church for years to come. **Amen.**

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