

Genesis 3:8-15
Psalm 130
2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1
Mark 3:20-35

Sermon June 6th, 2021

Jesus' Bridge of Love

Jesus's popularity is exploding. The crowd following him is so large that they can't even access their food. Wow! So many people in need. So many people living under the oppression of the Roman Empire. Hoping that Jesus will heal them. Hoping that Jesus will liberate them from this oppression. Spreading the news of what they hear and see about Jesus throughout Galilee.

What this means for Jesus is he can no longer fly under the radar. The authorities are going to become aware rather quickly of Jesus' movement. Not only the Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees, but also, the Roman governors. Even the Emperor himself.

I can see why Jesus' family reacts the way they do. They are afraid of what could happen to Jesus if he keeps challenging the authority's message with his words and deeds. They are afraid of what could happen to Jesus if he keeps pushing against the boundaries of the Empire. They are afraid of what could happen to them as relations of Jesus.

They can't understand why Jesus would keep provoking the very people who could have him killed.

So, they come to the conclusion that he must be dealing with some sort of psychotic break or burnout or mental instability. Why else would he be pushing against the boundaries? Why else would he be challenging the very people who could have him killed?

In response to their fear and anxiety, they want to seize Jesus. They want to get him inside the house where they can protect him. Where they can silence him.

Over this past year we have faced what feels like crisis after crisis. From the COVID pandemic to George Floyd's last breath to finding out about a mass grave at a residential school site in Kamloops, BC. A grave filled with 215 children. We have faced crisis after crisis as individuals, and as a society.

What often happens when we face a crisis of this magnitude is major change. Or in the words we used in 16th century Europe. Reformation.

Like Jesus who brings a new reality into the Empire. One that leads to major reforms in his religion and in society. The pandemic, George Floyd, the victims impacted by the

residential school findings are leading us to propose major reforms in our religion and in our society.

Our world, our lives are going through major change. And with this change, more often than not, comes reaction. Reactions that vary from person to person. From cohort to cohort.

For the crowd, for the disciples, they are standing behind Jesus. They are people who have longed for change. The status quo is what is hurting them. They are desperate to the point that they will even forgo food to experience Jesus' healing and redemption. To experience liberation from their oppression.

For Jesus' family, they want to stand behind him. They want to stand with the crowd and the disciples. But they are afraid of the cost. They know this could lead to Jesus' inevitable death. This could lead to their deaths. At this point the cost is too much for them to bear.

As we face the major changes of today who do we relate most with in our gospel story? Jesus' disciples? The crowd? Jesus' family? Are we afraid of the cost that comes with standing up against injustice? Are we afraid of the cost that comes when we admit that our past ways hurt our neighbors? Are we afraid of the cost that comes with standing with those marginalized people in our society?

It isn't easy to take up our crosses and follow Jesus. With this invitation comes suffering. With this invitation comes a cost. With this invitation our whole lives change.

If we dive further into the story we hear this morning, Jesus doesn't just have his family to contend with here. The scribes have come to challenge Jesus. In Mark's gospel this is one of the first places where we see the authorities finally react to what Jesus has been saying and doing.

Of course, the scribes are coming at this from a different angle. The scribes have been given honour and power in the current state of affairs. They don't want anything to change. They are benefiting from the current societal norms and systems. They don't want to lose any of this status of theirs.

Jesus' message challenges their power. Their status. If they choose to follow Jesus, they are giving this all up. If enough people decide to follow Jesus then they will still lose this power and status of theirs.

They too want to seize Jesus, but not to protect him. They want to protect their own power and status. What we end up seeing with all the authorities within the Empire, is a violent reaction to stop Jesus. A violent reaction that leads us to witness the horrific tragedy at Golgotha.

As we face major change in our lives and in our society from the current crises at hand, some of us are standing with the marginalized. Some of us are ready to embrace the change ahead. Some of us are afraid to take this leap of faith, and try to ignore or silence the movement. Some of us want to preserve our status and power in society. Some of us stand with the scribes, because the status quo has benefited us.

Unfortunately, what often happens when we come to a historical point of Reformation is division. Our fears, the potential costs, our hunger for power, our need to maintain our status, our need to keep face, seem to get in the way. Leading to division within our communities. We see this take place throughout history.

From the splits in the churches and in the synagogues during the first century. To the Reformation in Europe where the church divided into several factions. From the 20th century where we saw the rise of nationalism and two world wars as a consequence of our divisions. To the increasing polarization in today's world that is threatening the very nature of democracy.

Jesus warns us about the cost that comes when we are divided. When we can't seem to get it all together. We end up falling apart.

A marriage where two people can't come to a compromise or find common ground after arguments often leads to divorce. A society that is so divided on how to respond to a crises often leads to violence and sometimes even war.

Today is D-Day. A day where we see how deep the consequences can impact us when we don't get along with each other. A day where we commemorate and remember all the people who died, as a result of our division.

When we are divided amongst each other we cannot stand.

Well, in response to our fears, our anxieties, our potential losses, our want to keep our power, our greed, Jesus builds us a bridge to walk onto. Jesus says that anyone who does the will of God is family. Or in other words, anyone who reflects the love of God in their lives and in their community is united.

The love of God that is forgiving, welcoming, caring, healing, and redeeming. The love of God that calls us to repentance. The love of God that breathes new life into us when our heart is ready for change. When we live out this love, we are connected to one another as family. We are united.

Jesus' family eventually walks onto this bridge. Jesus' Mother and his brother James become influential figures in the early church as they continue Jesus' love movement.

Jesus builds us a bridge, and invites us to meet each other on it.

Because, if we can love one another as God loves us in the face of this major change then we will walk into this new reality with hope. Hope that life can be better for everyone. Because, if we can love one another as God loves us in the midst of this crisis and that crisis then we can rise above the death we witnessed at Golgotha, at Minneapolis, at Kamloops, throughout this pandemic, and find ourselves standing in the presence of the risen Christ. The risen Christ who breathes new life on us. Paving a new path forward for all of us. A path that is paved with God's love. Because, if we can love one another as God loves us, after all we have experienced this past year, then we can more honestly jump into reconciliation with one another, with people of color, with our indigenous neighbours. Then we can truly be Christ's hands and feet in our world. Healing and redeeming those who are hurting from our systems. From this crises.

Let us pray, gracious God, forgive us when our fears, our greed, our complacency get the best of us. Transform our hearts to love one another as you love us so we can face this change together. In unity, not as a divided people. Embracing your healing and redeeming love through this change. Through this Reformation that we stand in the midst of. **Amen.**

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