

Exodus 20:1-17
Psalm 65:9-13
1 Corinthians 1:18-25
John 2:13-22

Sermon March 7th, 2021

Jesus Does Something About It

Day after day, I went to the Temple to pray. Day after day, I walked past the place where the religious authorities were selling animals to people to sacrifice to God. Sometimes I needed to scrounge up enough money to purchase an animal to sacrifice on my behalf. Sometimes I would see someone trying to sell an animal for too much. Sometimes I would see people turned away, because they didn't have enough. Sometimes people couldn't even come to the table, because they were labelled unclean. I knew there were some abuses happening within the system, but doesn't abuses happen everywhere to some degree? Dealing with the Roman officers on a regular basis. I guess I have gotten used to the abuse.

Besides, I grew up in this system. I don't know anything different. Yes, I could have spoken up. Filed a complaint with the office of the Temple. But, what would that have accomplished? They probably would keep doing what they were doing? How can my one voice make a difference?

Maybe I would have faced consequences for speaking out. Like what happened to that Jesus fellow the other day. They didn't arrest him on the spot. But you could see how angry they were with Jesus for what he was saying and doing.

Though, I have to admit, I felt inspired by Jesus' words and actions. And kind of relieved that finally someone said something about what was going on in there. Maybe things will finally change.

When listening to our gospel today, I wonder how many people feel like this. Day after day seeing the issues, seeing the injustices, getting frustrated with everything they are seeing. And yet, doing nothing about it.

Being afraid of what might happen to them if they stand up to those in charge of the system. Or feeling like they have very little power to change things anyway so why bother? Or becoming desensitized to the abuses, after many years of living with these abuses. What else is there?

In Junior High I remember a situation where a boy in the boy's locker room was being bullied (**Image: Of someone being bullied**). Kicked around. I could tell he was hurt really bad. Most of us cheered on the bully. All I felt was disgust and sadness for what was going on. I wanted to speak up, but felt that if I did, I would be lying next to him.

How many of us witnessed a situation in school like this one where we wanted to say something, but our fears took over? And so, we put our head down and kept quiet.

In our reading of Exodus, God gives the people commandments to help them live in a healthy community. These guidelines help guide the people as they reidentify themselves as their own community post slavery. What we see happen as they wander through the desert is that they struggle to keep these commandments.

Commandments that were supposed to help them love God and one another. When they didn't live by these commandments, they saw the cost of doing nothing. Relationship breakdowns. Stress on the community. Feeling disconnected from God. Being vulnerable to the oppressive regimes that surrounded them.

We have all been in that place where we know we should probably say something or do something, but for some reason or another don't.

We have all seen the cost that comes with doing nothing. Whether it is feelings of guilt that fester, or the breakdown of a relationship, or continuing to live in fear, or the worsening of suffering and pain.

During Lent this year, as we think about our relationship with God, and with one another, we are also invited to think about our relationship with God's creation (**Image: picture of a valley**). In 2019 the Red Cross came out with a report that highlighted some of the pains they have witnessed in God's creation, and how those pains are impacting us. They called the report, "the cost of doing nothing."

Like our relationship with God and with one another, when we do nothing to change our words and actions that hurt God's creation, we see the wounds deepen. We see the guilt within us deepen. We feel more disconnected to God's creation. The problem just gets bigger and bigger. Until the problem looks too big for us to solve. Some argue we are already there.

When Jesus speaks out, many of the people who have been quietly struggling with the abuses they witnessed, now feel liberated. Someone has finally pointed out the Elephant in the room. Maybe, things will change.

Now Jesus faces consequences for speaking out. In fact, Jesus will end up dying for these words and actions. And not everyone stands behind Jesus. Fear and uncertainty still dictate many to stand behind the Empire.

But, with Jesus' action in the Temple, Jesus sets the stage for major reform. Reform that will open the doors for anyone to have access to God. If Jesus hadn't spoke out everything probably stays the same.

Like the Temple scene, Jesus says and acts in ways throughout his ministry that challenge the hurtful words and actions of people. Especially people who hold positions of authority. Through the Scriptures, through the Holy Spirit, through us, the church, Jesus continues to say and do many things to challenge those words and actions of ours that hurt one another and God's creation. Sometimes Jesus' words and actions are big and confrontational, and sometimes Jesus's words and actions are a small step to reform.

Some of us may be wondering why Jesus has to be so confrontational? Well, Jesus challenges our hurtful words and actions sometimes in really direct ways, because Jesus wants to reconcile us to God, to one another, to God's creation. Jesus wants to make everything right and it starts with calling out the injustices that lead to the breakdown of our relationships.

Jesus thinks our relationships are worth speaking up for. If we don't clear the air. If we don't thoroughly look at the wounds. Then it is really hard to properly cleanse those wounds. It is hard to heal from those wounds. Instead, we settle for bandages that don't often get to the root of the issue (**Image: Of someone putting a Band-Aid on them**).

That being said, Jesus invites us to continue his work challenging those voices and actions within us, and within one another that hurt us and God's creation.

Yes. Sometimes we will face pushback. Sometimes we will suffer consequences for speaking out. For doing things differently than we are used to.

But, when we can say or do something, anything, that reflects God's healing, then we are saying or doing things that impact our world in a positive way.

Maybe it is something as modest as picking up the garbage of someone who littered or buying local or recycling one more thing than you used to. Maybe it is sitting at the dialogue table and sharing why God's creation means so much to you. Maybe it is sharing your voice on a bigger platform. Maybe it is standing in the midst of nature on a camping trip valuing everything God has created in this world, and being inspired to do something to preserve it (**Image: Of family camping in the back country**). Maybe it is giving to an organization that supports the preservation of wildlife. Maybe it is getting more involved in the reconciling work being done in our communities with our indigenous neighbors.

Whatever it is that we can do to help be part of the healing of creation. Doing something more often than not makes a difference. While doing nothing often leads to more pain and suffering.

With this in mind, we are invited to listen to our gospel this morning. Our gospel that reassures us that Jesus stands with us. Jesus speaks with us. Jesus acts with us. Jesus works in and through us to heal everything and everyone in God's creation. We are not alone as we wrestle with these challenges. We are not alone as we take part in God's healing of creation. We are not alone. Christ's hands and feet are at work with us, and through us.

Let us pray, loving God, we hear your invitation to speak out against injustice. To speak and act in ways that challenge our words and behaviours that hurt our relationship with you, with one another, and with your creation. Yet, we also experience pain and suffering when we challenge the injustices in our world. Sometimes these sufferings discourage us from speaking out. Sometimes the overwhelming problems suck our energy dry. Give us the strength, compassion, and inspiration we need to make a difference in your world. To love all of God's creation with the same love you love us with. **Amen.**

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