

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

Psalms 25:1-9

Philippians 2:1-13

Matthew 21:23-32

## Sermon October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### *Jesus Reaches Out to the Marginalized*

In our gospel, Jesus' frustration is building, as many in his religious community don't bother to listen to what he has to say. They are complacent. They are comfortable with the way things are. They don't feel the need to follow Jesus down this road. "Just leave us alone already Jesus. Our lives are fine. Let someone else worry about the rejected, marginalized people in the community." (**Image One**: someone ignoring someone else)

Then there is the more vocal group who keeps pushing back at Jesus. Who wants to silence Jesus. With violence if necessary. Who feels that Jesus' message is too controversial for their liking (**Image Two**: someone fighting someone else). People who fear that Jesus' message will enrage the Roman Empire. Therefore, motivating the Empire to strip the religious leaders of any remaining authority they have.

Jesus' frustration is building...

Kind of how we feel when we try to get our teenager to do their homework. We give them the big lecture about how if they do their homework then they will get good grades. This will then open doors of opportunity for them when they get out of high school. Of course, more often than not, they roll their eyes, and shoot off a sarcastic response (**Image One**). Frustrating us even more.

Or working with someone who works at about 50% capacity. You feel like you need to overcompensate for their lack of effort. Especially when your group has a quota to fulfil.

Or being part of a community where lots of people are doing the bare minimum while you find yourself volunteering in four or five different roles (**Image One**). It is easy to start feeling resentful, frustrated, wishing these people would do more.

Or sharing a message you are really passionate about with your neighbours, community members, friends, family, and they just ignore you. Or they try to silence you, because they don't like what you are saying (**Image Two**).

We find ourselves in similar situations as Jesus where our frustration builds due to people's feelings of complacency or stubbornness.

As we get closer to the 506<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, we reflect on all that Martin Luther faced when he was trying to reform the church. Many of his colleagues were complacent. Not wanting to challenge the authorities (**Image One**). Hoping Luther would be quiet already. Others persecuted him for speaking out against some of the

injustices he saw in the church (**Image Two**). Eventually the leadership exiled him when he refused to recant for his message.

Luther's frustrations were building and building from these experiences, which are reflected in his later writings. There we read that he could no longer see a possible bridge between the Reformers reforms, and the church's current stance on theological principles. There we can see his anger grow as his writings towards the church leadership of his day became nastier and nastier (**Image Two**).

Like us, like Luther, Jesus' frustration is building...

Partly, because Jesus sees the consequences we face when we don't listen to Jesus. When we decide to ignore Jesus' message or even resist this message. Unfortunately, people get hurt. People feel rejected (**Image One**). Marginalized. Unloved. Devalued. Like Saul before he becomes Paul, we find ourselves persecuting God's beloved children.

Unfortunately, we also become more inward thinking. Not caring for our neighbours, but only for ourselves. Our decision making as a body of faith becomes shaped by feelings of scarcity. Leading us to be less generous, which has negative impacts on the communities we minister to (**Image One**).

Kind of how our frustrations towards our teenagers for not doing their homework are rooted in the consequences we foresee. Like, not getting into a post-secondary institution or working in an underpaying job or still living with us until they are forty.

Or getting yelled at by our boss, because we don't meet our quota on time.

Or dealing with mass burnout in volunteers who have done so much to keep the community going. And then watching the community collapse.

Or watching our community make the same mistakes over and over again, because of our unwillingness to listen (**Image One**).

Well, in response to the complacency and stubbornness of the people, Jesus shares a parable with them, with us, to reiterate one of his reasons for reaching out to the marginalized people in his community. Besides his compassion for those who have been mistreated in their communities. These people are willing to listen. They are willing to follow Jesus (**Image Three**: people listening to Jesus). If the people in his community don't want to listen, then he will find those who will. Jesus will not let complacency or stubbornness stop him from sharing his message of God's love for the world. Even if the Empire decides to react violently. Even if the religious authorities exile him. Even if his students walk away. Even if his neighbours avoid him in the streets. Jesus will continue to proclaim God's love for the world. Jesus will continue to live out this radical hospitality welcoming the marginalized people he encounters (**Image Three**).

And Jesus invites us to do the same. To continue to live out this radical hospitality. To proclaim God's love for the world (**Image Three**). To not cheapen the grace God gives us by being complacent or resistant to Jesus' message. To not be caught at the marriage ceremony without our Christ gown on. But to keep our Christ gown on and stand with the marginalized people. Valuing them. Showing them that they are loved.

Let us pray, gracious God, you welcome us, you love us for who we are. Help us appreciate this grace you offer up to us. Encourage us through this grace to be active participants in your work in the world. Loving and welcoming the marginalized peoples we meet. **Amen.**

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