

Genesis 11:1-9
Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
Acts 2:1-21
John 14:8-17

Sermon June 5th, 2022

Think of the Possibilities

In our gospel this morning, Philip responds to Jesus' news that he is going to die soon, with anxiety and fear. Philip is worried about what the ministry of Jesus will look like after Jesus's death? Do they have what it takes to carry on this ministry? Or, will Jesus's words and actions die with him? Will the authorities come after them next?

We can relate to Philip here. When we face the death of something or someone in our lives, we feel anxious and scared of what our lives will look like in the aftermath? For example, when we move to a new community. We worry about what our past friendships will look like now that we live hundreds of miles away from each other (**Image**). We worry about, whether, we will be able to make new friends in our new community. Whether we will be able to fit in.

When we retire from a career, we feel anxious and scared of what life will be like without so much structure, and a steady pay check. Will I miss my career? Will I feel empty? How will I redefine meaning in my life, and what will that look like? We worry about the company or organization that we leave behind. What will the office look like without me there? Will the new person be able to carry on what I was doing? Or will they do something completely different? What if they fail?

When we sell our home, we feel anxious about what the new owners will do to our home. Will they do huge renovations making our home unrecognizable (**Image**)? Will they cut down that tree that triggers so many good memories for us? What will it be like living in our new home or condo? Will I miss gardening?

When a loved one dies, we feel anxious and scared of what our lives will look like without them in it? Who do I go to for advice now? Will I start to forget them? Will I ever experience love again? Will I feel happy again? Will my life become unrecognizable?

We can relate to Philip here. It is hard to see what the future will look like in the aftermath of grief.

Well, as Philip wrestles with his anxieties and fears, he pleads with Jesus to see God. If only Philip and the others can see God. Then they will have hope that Jesus' ministry will continue even after his death.

Sounds familiar. How often do we long to see God when feeling anxious and scared about the unknowns we experience? God reveal yourself to me in this new community.

God help me trust in your presence and promise to care for me in my retirement years. God open my heart to see you as I lay here alone in our bed.

In response to Philip. In response to us. Jesus says that everything Jesus has said and done is a witness of God's presence in our lives. Philip, the others, us, have seen God through Jesus.

Jesus then empowers the disciples, us, to believe that we will do more amazing things than we were able to do with Jesus here. In other words, the future looks brighter than what we have witnessed in the gospels.

Gerard Sloyan in his commentary on John says it best when he says "Throughout the Gospel runs the theme that in Jesus' absence all that could not be achieved in his presence is possible."

Jesus is encouraging the disciples, and us, to think of the possibilities, not the impossibilities.

Jesus promises us that we will receive an advocate, the Holy Spirit, that will make what to us seems impossible, possible.

In the book of Acts, on the day of Pentecost, we hear the story of all the believers being in one place. More than likely, they are hiding out from the authorities, supporting each other, as they try and avoid the same fate Jesus faced.

Peter has doubted, denied, reacted violently. The others fled. The believers have been challenged by Jesus' death, and in their grief, are unable to continue Jesus' ministry at this time. So, they are gathered together in one space, watching out for each other. Hoping for Jesus to appear to them again.

Well, what we see next is a miracle. An impossible moment made possible by the Holy Spirit. The believers go from anxious and scared to proclaiming the gospel in several different languages.

Peter then is transformed from a timid unsure leader to one who challenges the accusations of the crowd, and proclaims Christ boldly. Not worried about the cost.

Peter has received the promise of Jesus, and is now, reassured that through the Holy Spirit, he and the others will be able to do amazing things. Even more amazing things than when Jesus was physically here with them.

We see this through the rest of the book of Acts when we hear of the stories of the disciples and what they do to transform lives and their communities.

Jesus breathes on us the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, so that we too, can believe that through this Spirit, the impossible becomes possible.

There are a lot of stories I can think back on in my own life where the Holy Spirit turned what I thought was impossible into something possible. For example, turning me from a person who flunked out of high school to a person who went on to receive a master's Degree. Or turning me from an insecure broken mess to a leader in a faith community. I'm sure if you took a moment to reflect on your own life you could share similar stories. We have moments in our lives where something we thought was impossible became possible.

As a church community, we have experienced many changes over the years. We have had moments where what we thought was impossible became possible. I think of all that we were able to do to create an opportunity for people to worship safely during the pandemic (**Image**). At the beginning, we struggled to see the possibilities. But now, wow.

This congregation has many stories we can share over the years where what we thought was impossible became possible.

And we are not alone in this witness. I had a colleague share a story about how the congregation he was serving in needed to raise almost 50, 000 to meet their budget. And they had six weeks to do it. If not, they would have to lay off some staff. Well, in those six weeks they actually raised 70, 000. What my colleague thought would be impossible became possible.

As the church, we have heard a lot of doom and gloom about our future. Declining funds and members. A less relevant voice in society. Our churches being obsolete in twenty-five years. It is easy to see that the survival of the church looks bleak. Maybe, even impossible.

But what I have learned through the history of the church is that the Holy Spirit has made a lot of things that seemed impossible, possible. With this witness in mind, I believe that even though we are experiencing a lot of changes in our churches this century, that the church will continue to live out its mission. The church will continue to thrive and grow (**Image**). I believe this, because I choose to think of the possibilities. Just as the believers do on the day of Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit makes what seems impossible, possible. Instead, of getting bogged down with anxiety and fear. Focusing so attentively on the impossible. Think of the possibilities. Jesus says to us.

Let us pray, gracious God, give us hope to believe in the power of your Holy Spirit. To believe that with you anything is possible. **Amen.**