

Sunday, October 7, 2018

Genesis 2:18-24

Psalm 8

Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Mark 10:2-16

Balance on the Journey

Prayer: "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you." Amen.

Last week we celebrated our Founders' Day, and Father Bob preached about the journey: as individuals and as Grace Church. This morning I'd like to continue talking about our journeys, but I would specifically like to focus on finding balance on our journeys.

Often times, we can become unbalanced without even realizing it:

A little over a year ago I went to an Ear, Nose, and Throat doctor because I was having bouts of dizziness, and I thought it might be related to seasonal allergies effecting my sinus cavities. After doing a quick exam, the doctor had me do this exercise where I held out my arms with my palms facing upward, I closed my eyes, and marched in place. I felt incredibly ridiculous. After about 45 seconds, the doctor asked me to stop marching and open my eyes. When I opened my eyes, I was facing 90 degrees in a different direction. I was incredibly disoriented, and the doctor responded with a very gentle voice saying "it's ok, it's ok" as he guided me back to my chair. It turns out that a minute amount of pressure had built up in my inner ear, which caused my entire body to be slightly off balance.

Now, this is a literal example of being unbalanced, disoriented, and being guided back. It's not nearly as easy to spot these examples in everyday life. But in the readings we heard this morning, we can begin to understand biblical disorientation. In the readings from Hebrews, we are reminded that the Word of God is spoken through the son, and then in the gospel we're thrown a curve ball when the Pharisees ask Jesus about divorce and adultery, and then we're all of a sudden talking about little children coming to Jesus. We're going in one direction, and then we're all of a sudden going 90 degrees in a different direction, and then we're shifted back in a direction similar to the original direction.

So how do we balance all of the direction changes? How do we balance discussions in the Bible that make us uncomfortable. As the preacher, it can be very tempting to simply focus on the "easier" scriptures, and there are times when that might be called for, but if we only choose to focus on the "easier" scriptures and themes, then we're just as unbalanced. We'd be heading down an unrealistic path where everyone wears rose colored glasses.

So before we can continue on our journey, we need to pause and try to discern what is happening in this gospel, which is no easy task.

At first glance, this gospel appears to have some very harsh things to say about divorce, but if we take a deeper look, we can see that Jesus doesn't explicitly answer the question. The Pharisees ask Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" Jesus then asks them to recall back to what Moses said, and then he reframes the question from the legality of divorce to the grounds for marriage.

This is an important thing to note, because it shows that Jesus doesn't get caught up in the traps that Pharisees set out for him. Later on in this gospel, the Pharisees will again ask Jesus questions about successive marriage and paying taxes to the emperor. They don't really care about the answer, because the Pharisees followed the laws of the land, but what they wanted to hear was something that could trap Jesus. They ask him impossible questions that we are still talking about in the church today, and Jesus still finds a way to be balanced, to be human and to be God.

The problem with these impossible questions, is that they draw lines in the sand and create sides. They create groups of people that are known as the opposition, the ones we must fight. In our country, we draw lines in the sand and fight each other instead of fighting the issues. When this happens, we don't progress on our journey. I honestly struggle with what is happening in our country right now, but following God isn't about going down one prescribed path where we all have to agree before continuing the journey. Following God involves forming a new path when society only gives you one or two options.

As Christians, we are called to erase the lines that are drawn in the sand, but that doesn't mean that we can't disagree on important matters. That doesn't mean that we can't stand up against what we think is wrong. In our baptismal covenant, we are called to "strive for justice and peace among all people, AND [to] respect the dignity of every human being." EVERY human being — not just the ones we like and agree with.

So how can we do this? Honestly, I can't tell you exactly what to do, but prayer is a really good place to start. When we feel the strains of being unbalanced — pause to pray for those in harm. And those causing harm. Pray for guidance. Pray for balance. And then figure out what your next steps might be.

What are small things we can do to create more balance in the world? Pray, and then go out and do them.

AMEN.