

Saturday: Read John 20: 11-18

Disciples scholar Lisa Davison testifies, “The text seems so clear; a woman was sent by the risen Jesus to preach the good news to his male disciples. While he could have appeared to Simon Peter and/or the other male disciple who came to the tomb, he chose instead to grant this experience to a woman. Mary Magdalene’s important role at the beginning of the Christian movement was too important to leave out of this story. While it takes a direct appearance of the risen Jesus to fully convince the male disciples, a woman gave the first testimony to what became the key celebration of Easter.” When have you heard the good news preached from someone whom you least expected to hear it? Did you first believe it? What made it hard to believe? What cultural/social norms might we need to break free from in order to hear the good news of the Gospel?

Prayer: Lord, open my ears to hear your good news and open my heart to receive it. Amen.

Sermon Notes



Sermon: Life in the Fast Lane

Selections from Joshua 2 & 6

Then Joshua son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, ‘Go, view the land, especially Jericho.’ So they went, and entered the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and spent the night there. The king of Jericho was told, ‘Some Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land.’ Then the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, ‘Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come only to search out the whole land.’ But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, ‘True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they came from. And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them.’ She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax that she had laid out on the roof. So the men pursued them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof and said to the men: ‘I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you...The LORD your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below. Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the LORD that you in turn will deal kindly with my family...’The men said to her, ‘Our life for yours! If you do not tell this business of ours, then we will deal kindly and faithfully with you when the LORD gives us the land.’

Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the outer side of the city wall and she resided within the wall itself. She said to them, ‘Go towards the hill country, so that the pursuers may not come upon you. Hide yourselves there for three days, until the pursuers have returned; then afterwards you may go on your way...’ Then she tied the crimson cord in the window.

[After Jericho had fallen,] Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, ‘Go into the prostitute’s house, and bring the woman out of it and all who belong to her, as you swore to her.’ So the young men who had been spies went in and brought Rahab out, along with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all who belonged to her—they brought all her kindred out—and set them outside the camp of Israel. They burned down the city, and everything in it; only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. But Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, Joshua spared. Her family has lived in Israel ever since. For she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Monday: Read Matthew 1: 18-25; Luke 1: 26-38

Our culture puts a lot of stock in credentials. If we hire someone for a job, we want to know they’re capable of doing the work. If we ask someone for advice, we want to know they’re familiar with the subject matter. The more titles, diplomas, and achievements a person has, the more we’re inclined to trust them. Generally, this is a prudent attitude for approaching the world, but God has a way of turning our preconceptions upside-down. Mary and Joseph were unlikely candidates to parent the Messiah. A poor couple from the wrong side of the tracks. Yet they each responded to God’s call with faith. When have you found yourself called to do a task for which you were unprepared? How did you respond? Does the story of Mary and Joseph strengthen your faith that God can use you in powerful ways?

Prayer: God, make me ready and willing to say “yes” when you call on me. Amen.

Tuesday: Read Acts 9: 1-20

Taking a risk to hire someone with no experience for a job is one thing. Recruiting the enemy is quite another! That’s how Ananias must have felt when he was asked to be Paul’s recruiter. Yet when the risen Lord called Paul he turned his life over to Christ. Paul’s letters reveal that his conversion struck a deep chord. Believing in his version of goodness led to judgment and violence, but the grace of God in Christ moved him from self-righteousness to love, from judgment to mercy, from exclusion to embrace. Have you ever had a long held belief that you felt God was calling you to change? When have you recognized your own self-righteousness and laid it down for the sake of love? How does it feel to move from judgement to mercy?

Prayer: Lord, remove the scales from my eyes and strengthen me to proclaim your inclusive love. Amen.

Wednesday: Read Genesis 21: 1-7; 1Timothy 4: 12-16

Too often I hear people say, “I’m too old to do that.” Or “They’re too young to make a difference.” These readings stand as witnesses that God’s work has no age limit. Timothy was not too young to bring a prophetic word from God. Abraham and Sarah were not too old to start a great nation. Do you have an excuse ready when God calls you? It doesn’t matter who you are or what you’re age -

God can use you to make a difference in this world. God isn’t looking for people with lots of money, or jaw dropping good looks, or the proper education. God is looking for ordinary people, of all ages, willing to put their trust in God. Have you ever considered yourself too old or young for a ministry role in the church? Is there a better way in which the church can discern ministry roles than a person’s age or experience? What ministry might God be calling you to right now? At this age?

Prayer: Lord, lead me, right now, to do ministry in your name. Amen.

Thursday: Read Exodus 4:1-17

Moses was a prince of Egypt, but he was also a murderer. After having killed an Egyptian (Exodus 2:12), he fled to Midian. It is there, when he is hiding out that God calls him into service. We often think of Moses as being a formidable character (thanks to Cecil B. DeMille). Yet Moses pleads with God not to send him to Egypt; finally admitting he lacks self confidence due to a speech impediment. When he admits his need, God provides. Aaron, his brother, will be his aid and work with him to accomplish God’s mission of freeing the Israelites from slavery. Too often we think we must go it alone. This passage reminds us that in ministry we are called to work together to accomplish God’s mission. How often do you doubt your ability to do something challenging for God? What makes you lack self confidence? Who has been your helper, partner, mentor in the faith?

Prayer: Use me, in my imperfection, to accomplish your mission, O God. Amen.

Friday: Read Luke 22: 54-62

Peter - Simon - The Rock - The one on whom Jesus would build his church. This is the same Peter we find in the courtyard on the eve of Jesus’ crucifixion. Though he sat in the darkness, the firelight made his face recognizable enough. He was caught. Three times identified as one of Jesus’ followers. Three times Peter denied it. Fred Craddock says the story is clear - he was tested, and he failed. Luke tells us that just as the cock crowed Jesus turned and looked at Peter. That look triggered his memories of Jesus’ promise and prediction and he was immediately overcome with remorse. It was the first step on the path to repentance and restoration. We do not get to see just how the restoration took place, yet Luke verifies it in his writing when it is Peter who delivers the Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:14). Following Jesus is difficult! Sometimes we stumble, fall, fail. Sometimes we forget our promises to stand firm. Sometimes we lurk in the shadow hoping someone else will be identified as a disciple instead of us. Jesus did not give up on Peter. He will not give up on us either! When have you found it difficult to stay with Jesus? Have there been times you’ve hidden your faith? How do you move toward restoration of your faith after falling? Know that Jesus looks upon you with love and confidence that you are a worthy disciple.

Prayer: In my failures, O Lord, let me see your face, repent and be restored. Amen.