

North Shore Congregational Church

Located in Fox Point, WI

June 21, 2015

How Will They Know?

Scripture Readings - 1Samuel 17:57-18:5; Mark 4:35-41

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1Samuel 17:57-18:5

57On David's return from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand. 58Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

18When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. 3Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. 4Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. 5David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; as a result, Saul set him over the army. And all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved.

Mark 4:35-41

35On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." 36And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. 37A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" 39He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. 40He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" 41And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

How Will They Know?

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Let us pray; Lord, at this time we ask your presence be made known to us in the hearing of these words...and may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable, even pleasing to you, Holy One. AMEN.

Today we mark a special day out of the year as Father's Day. Whether you are a father, uncle, big brother, cousin, grandfather, or mentor, and whether your father or any of these named father-figures are present in your lives today or they have passed to eternal life, we celebrate the men who have served in the capacity of fathers in our lives. We are grateful for the love, leadership, and compassion these men have and perhaps continue to offer for us each day. So, to all the men in our lives, we honor you for the ways in which you give of yourselves each and every day.

Additionally, today is the beginning of Summer. We have more daylight to participate in those things outside that we wait all winter long to do; whatever that may be for you. For me, it means I get to play in the dirt of my gardens, walk with the warmth of the sun's rays streaming down on me, kayaking, and sitting at the outdoor table enjoying the company of family and friends over a delicious meal of grilled, anything! :-). This day is a beautiful time of year; the sun

shines longer, the air is warmer, school is out for many students and teachers, summer vacations are launching into action, mission trips are being embarked upon, and, as the song goes, “the livin’ is easy.”

But today is also another day that is not so easy. It is the first Sunday that Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina will gather together in worship without their pastor and eight sisters and brothers of faith. Today, like many people across our nation we are saddened for the loss of these beautiful lives. Perhaps we are astounded and stunned that this brutal, seemingly racially motivated, hate-crime could take place in the sanctity of a sanctuary.

Maybe you are like me; having thought of little else since the news of this tragedy broke on Wednesday evening. We lament with our sisters and brothers for the loss of the faithful as they were praying to God in a holy place, much like our own.

As people of faith, how can we make sense of and learn from this event? How can we be agents of change so that all of God’s people can be free of oppression?

Maybe we are not supposed to make sense of it.

Maybe we need to sit in the tension of this difficult time to be compelled to act in ways that unite through our acts of love. Like the words of our sermon hymn today states, “we will walk and work with each other, side by side, hand in hand; and they will know we are Christians by our love, by our love.”

When, in our Old Testament reading, Jonathan met and was witness to, the great courage of David upon his defeat of the exceptional Philistine warrior Goliath, he demonstrated a great love and admiration for him by gifting David with his robe and belt with bow and sword.

By this gesture, Jonathan was showing David he was willing to give of himself so that David could be more of what he was called and anointed to be. Isn’t that what our fathers or father-like figures did and continue to do for us in our own lives? Even still through the memory of them? Haven’t they, too, wished to give of themselves to us so that we could be the best version of ourselves and be more of what we are meant to be? Isn’t that what we know of God, too? God, gave us Jesus so that we would learn what it is like to be in a full, loving relationship with God and one another. That through this loving example we might have fullness of life through salvation.

We might not always understand or be able to make sense of the hurt and pain in our lives. The ‘Why do bad things happen to good people?’ question seems to loom larger than life when tragedy strikes and we have little answers. At times we turn to God and we rail with anger, other times we cry aloud lamenting, ‘How long, O LORD, how long?’ Yet, at other times we are able to turn to God for comfort because we know, by faith and the good examples of the faithful, God is for us and desires for us to live our lives in the fullness of Holy love and grace.

We will stumble, we will get knocked down, but we will also experience the joys of God’s kingdom among one another.

How will they know we are God’s beloved?

(Selah...)

The LOVE of God was present amid a “Peace Circle” when over 1000 Muslims joined hands in solidarity to encircle a Norwegian Synagogue so that Jews there might worship in peace after attacks by radical Islamists in Europe earlier this year. Random acts of kindness spilled over from the graduating 8th-graders in Washington, MO earlier this year when part of their ear-marked money for a class activity turned into generously buying flowers for local nursing home residents, supplying quarters for the patrons of Aldi grocery store for their carts, and the purchase of stuffed animals for children in a local hospital. Earlier this week in Wauwatosa, students at a Catholic school used some anonymously donated money to give back

to the surrounding area, of which, part went to staff at Samuel Clemens School to buy them lunch and thank them for their hard work.

And yet, right here at North Shore Congregational Church are demonstrations of how God is in our midst. Each month, through many kind, caring, and loving members and friends nutritious bagged lunches are prepared for a daytime homeless shelter in the city of Milwaukee. A hot dinner is prepared then served at St. Ben's downtown by our own confirmation class and many other devoted adults. We see evidences of God's love infused in the Centering Prayer time between worship services; We hear God's Love, in the bantering conversation above the gentle clicking of knitting needles lovingly creating Prayer Shawls which provide comfort and solace for difficult times; We get a sense of the Love of God, in the activities and excited chatter taking place in each of the Sunday School classrooms working on that week's lesson; We recognize God's Holy presence in the sharing of joys and celebrations of the church; And we all are strengthened as faithful people of a loving God when we gather in worship together and delight God through our singing, our prayers, and when we join in unison as we recite the prayer of our Lord.

These acts may seem simple, but they are shaping and forming our hearts and minds to be like the Holy One. We are reflecting the light of God into the world.

As the author of the book of James states in 3:13, "Who is wise and understanding among you? Show your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom."

So, are we willing to be agents of change in a hurting world by modeling our own lives after God, recognizing something within another unlikely servant much like David, that if nurtured would become someone great?

Are we willing to be like the fathers and father-like figures in our lives that lived in ways worthy of emulating for future generations?

Will we be like Jesus, who, even when weary of the growing crowds and the unending questions, continued to show his disciples Saving Grace through the calming of the winds and the sea?

Will we, buoyed by faithful worship practices and acts of kindness and love, be able to reach out to those in our midst that are different from us, who are the least, the lost, and the forgotten of our society?

I ask myself and each one of you:

Are you calming the winds in someone's world?

Are you creating a place of sanctuary for those who are weary?

Are you really Loving your neighbor as yourself?

Are you being the change you wish to see in the world?

I pray it be so.

AMEN.

Concerns of the Church & Morning Prayer

* We lift up those serving on the Hosanna Mission Trip in PA who left yesterday.

We continue to hold Joe Hilyard in prayer as he continues to in healing.

We remember the family of "Kit" Carson, especially Barb Carson, this past Wednesday was his Memorial Service.

We lift up Rev. Julie and Mark and Laurie Swartwout as they attend the National Congregational Meeting in Utah.

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage.

Life-giving God,
heal our lives, that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds and offer you thanks from
generation to generation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of Invocation & The Lord's Prayer:

Your hand is upon your people, O God,
to guide and protect them through the ages.
Keep in your service
those you have called and anointed,
that the powers of this world may not overwhelm us,
but that, secure in your love,
we may carry out your will
in the face of all adversity.
We join in unison saying together the prayer Jesus taught saying:

Our Father, who art in Heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day, our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
forever. AMEN.

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