

November 21, 2021

Scriptural Lesson: Psalm 132: 1-9

Gospel Lesson: John 18: 33-37

Sermon Series: Holy Renovation

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

KJ Journal Entry; November 15, 2021

God, my heart is filled with concern, waning hope, fear and angst all at the same time. We are in a world where everything has become so polarized by issues surrounding race, politics, climate concerns, pandemic concerns, health concerns and more.

What is most concerning is trying to lead and serve in such a time as this; a time where all of our patience is being tested; a time where our friends are becoming our foes; a time where church membership and engagement and its vitality is

beyond the point of being problematic; a time where people are losing their hope; their energy; their will to keep doing what is good and right. Lord help me...help us. By the way, I need to make sure that I call my mother as soon as I am done and wish her a happy birthday. Sigh.....I hope my mom knows how much I love her and am glad that she has raised us to be who we are today.

Love, your weary servant... KJ.

What you just heard my beloved community, is an excerpt out of my journal. Now I am not an avid journal-er per se (is that a real word?...I don't know but y'all get the gist right?!);

- But I am one of those diarist (that is a word ha!) where when things get really tough and complicated in my life; this is when I will usually pick up a pen and begin to write;

- But not just any kind of pen or any type of journal either.....just as in Kirstie fashion...the process towards healing and renovation is a whole #mood for me.
- For depending on the crisis or concern going on in my life and depending on my mood and spiritual disposition; sometimes a regular pen or a regular piece of paper won't do.
- Sometimes, my process towards renovating my heart and soul; involves taking a trip to Barnes and Noble, Target or Walmart; to peruse their section of journals and pen collections; as I wait for one to metaphorically call out my name and convince my spirit that a spiritual breakthrough is possible if I chose it;
- And some may find this admission somewhat odd or a little silly; but before I was ordained in the Methodist Church, I learned that there is a reason

for this process; and it is tied to the type of process communicator that I am.

- You see when I was at the place in my career where our own Pastor Caity is; as a newly Commissioned Provisionary Elder in our conference; one of the trainings that she will receive is Process Communication Model training aka PCM.
- So in a nutshell without getting too far off track from the main point of this sermon; PCM is an innovative model that allows you to understand the depth of your personality structure.
- There is a school of thought that all of our personalities fits into 6 main categories; imaginer, promoter, rebel, harmonizer, thinker, persister; where the imaginer tends to be more of a dreamer processor; the promoter tends to be charming and likable and action oriented; the rebel tends to react to people with likes and dislikes; the

harmonizer tends to experience the world through emotions (hence the adage; she/he/ they wears their emotions on their sleeves); where the thinker tends to use facts and data to inform their opinions and understandings; leaving the persister to rely on their embedded values and upbringings to inform their worldview; and there is so much more to this PCM process and it is really fascinating and life-giving to learn some of these tools; especially as it pertains to conflict resolution, leading staff, teams, congregations, businesses and more;

- Not to mention we all have some element of each of these PCM traits that we will unpack more throughout this series and midweek as I lead a class entitled “Renovate” beginning Wednesday December 1 at 6:30; (I will have more information going out soon on this); all because in my mind the pathway to how we might become renovated

is by being self aware with who we are... and this PCM teaching I believe will help us to get there both individually and collectively; for when we know better... we do better... Amen!

- So for now in this message I will name that there is normally one dominant communication model that is our go to....although we may from time to time tap into the other levels of our personality/ communication condo.
- And so for those who knows me well; you could probably guess that harmonizer is **my primary go to** of how I experience the world; the persister is a close runner up and the thinker is not too far behind...
- But primarily the way I experience the world is through my emotions; which sometimes can get me into trouble and what may make me a decent pastor at the same time;

- Furthermore, a true harmonizer would rely on that perfect journal, or perfect pen, or perfect outfit, or perfect scent, or room aesthetic and more; to make them feel their best selves;
- So hopefully that admission of who I am; will give you all a little more insight of who your spiritual leader is.
- Furthermore, although we are not through this pandemic yet as cases are unfortunately climbing again; I extend an open invitation to get to know you more one on one through coffee, conversations, home gatherings and more!
- **So shifting to our scriptural lesson this morning; although by now you know I most likely have been talking about it all along....in many ways I can tell that David is most likely a harmonizer as well.**
- For if you zone into the first verse of the 132rd psalm this morning, the scripture reveals a request

that the Lord “remember in David’s favor all the hardships he endured.”

- And so the reason why we know that David was most likely a harmonizer is that from former psalms; we will note that David had no qualms with sharing just how difficult his hardships were and in the same respect his joys as well;
- For David, the young shepherd boy who would become king. David, the brave young man of God who killed the giant Goliath with a single stone. David, who danced before the Lord, praising his name in the Psalms; when David felt something... the whole world knew it;
- For he was descriptive in his joys, pains, fears and struggles.
- Furthermore, what is most fascinating about this psalm is that this is not the voice of David; their harmonizer leader who is asking for this request of favor in our text;

- This is David's metaphorical congregation looking upon their leader; as he attempts to figure out how to build a dwelling place; asking for this request of favor from the Lord;
- You see church as a liturgy, this passage who some scholars think may have been sung by a choir, is a special request to God, that **Jehovah remembers the hardships that this leader has endured for the kingdom....**
- **Furthermore this community is showing their support of their leader David through this supplication, by asking God to grant favor upon their leader; for they understood that granting favor upon their leader also meant that favor was granted upon the community in which David served.**
- If you jump down to verse 10, the congregation even says; "For your servant David's sake, do not turn away the face of your anointed one."

- And so as a leader during a time such as this, I am getting some preaching energy at this very revelation;
- Because if I can keep it 100 with you all as the present generation often says;
- The state of the Church as a whole is at risk..not just ours...but across the board;
- Financially, you all received some communication from our Stewardship and Finance Committee and myself; where we have raised some financial concerns; in the midst of a season, where we are inviting you to prayerfully pledge your financial gifts for the financial upcoming planning year of 2022; a year that helps financially support the pastoral leadership, staff, worship, music, building and overall ability to serve this community with our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.
- Your pledge is a commitment of intent to fund the mission and ministries of First United Methodist

Church of Lincoln, NE; understanding that there are times in our lives where we cannot always fulfill our intentions, but your pledge does allow myself and the finance committee and others to hopefully plan in the future.

- Every year, the Church pledges have decreased over the past few years; this is downward trajectory that is not unfamiliar to our churches throughout our conference.
- In addition, the Stewardship and Finance Committee and myself have discerned financial opportunities for improvement that have gone as far back as at least 4 years; although we are suspecting even longer; where our expenditures have been more than our income.
- Financial concerns that did not possibly feel as threatening or as dire pre Covid; but as in all businesses and non-profit organizations; this pandemic has really amplified issues that can no

longer be dismissed; that requires immediate attention and urgent action;

- Financial concerns that actually reflect the wider macro culture as well; where reports that in the month of September alone; the US has experienced roughly 4.4 million Americans quit their job in which this period in our US history is being named as the Great Resignation ; because people are searching for better economic options for their families; fyi this is another suspecting consequence of the pandemic that we are in;
- **So with that said, I first want to thank Glenn Johnson, Aaron Raymond, Mike Coffey, Chuck Leypoldt and the entire finance committee for taking this financial challenge on; to create more financial transparency and for creating solutions that will keep our church open for the next 100 years.**

- Furthermore, this is where I am transitioning back to our scriptural lesson; there are a number of responses that I anticipate can come from this congregation upon hearing this kind of news that can be startling for some.
- For the process communication model that I took some time to explain informs me of this;
- **That our imaginers** who are both in this congregation and listening online might take some quiet time to process and reflect on what I am saying and wait to see how things manifest fully before responding;
- **The rebels might** be tempted to formulate their concerns and frustrations and share their perspectives;
- **The promoters might** provide a list of next steps of action;
- **The harmonizers might** verbally express their feelings of uncertainty and worry;

- **The thinkers might** take the time to pour over the numbers and data until solutions start to emerge;
- **The Persisters might** begin to formulate some beliefs and values for causes and solutions;
- **All of these potential responses** I stopped by to say publicly, matter to the heart of your pastor and team;
- **All of these potential responses** keeps your pastor and team up at night;
- **All of these potential responses** keep every business owner and non-profit leader up at night;
- **For the answer is not** easily detectable if I am honest of how we are going to pull through this;
- **The answer is not easily** discernible for how any of us across the globe are going to pull out of this;
- But our psalm this morning gives us a suggested response;

- **For the people sensed that their leader was under intense hardship and distress; as he was tasked to discern how might he help establish a dwelling place for God;**
- The people could see the weight that was on their leader's shoulder to help plant seed within the people to help establish this sanctuary;
- **A sanctuary that** if I were to place it in today's time that could be a space that could walk alongside immigrants and refugees who seek asylum;
- **A sanctuary that could be a place that would seek** to establish social concerns such as gender justice and deem it as **a human right**; where every woman and girl is entitled to live in dignity and in freedom, without any fear;
- **A sanctuary that seeks** to uphold the essence of Micah 6:8; of what is good and what the Lord requires of us; to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.

- **A sanctuary that seeks** to love God and love our neighbor without exception or bias; but just as God loves us all;
- This congregation in our passage understood that a renovation was needed in the life of their community;
- This congregation of our scripture this morning; the imaginers, rebels, promoters, thinkers, harmonizers and persisters; chose to come together as one unified front; in one unified process of communication; to support their leader who was appointed for such a time as this;
- For **they realized** that David was appointed by God;
- **They realized** that David was anointed by God;
- Peeking at the gospel of John 18 of our liturgical sessions this week; a gospel where the people were seeking to establish the authority of Jesus; the people of this psalm made it clear that they

understood who was the authority in their lives; the Triune God Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer and all who seek to walk in this light;

- **Friends what a powerful lesson this congregation of our text teaches us this morning on how to move forward together through trying times;**
- The power of community;
- **The positive impact and possibilities** that can come together when we stay united in this community;
- **The positive impact and possibilities that can come** together when we all take accountability in this community;
- **The positive impact and possibilities and solutions that can emerge,** when we stay faithful to this community and all of the appointed leaders that were tasked to steer these metaphorical boats

of mercy, justice and love during this season of rough waters.

- **So normally I am more explicit in laying out our sermon series;**
- I must admit I am amazed yet slightly uncomfortable with the organic way in which this series is birthing within me;
- Just know **that I can palpably feel and discern** that we all could use a renovation in our lives;
- **I can feel that we all** could use a spiritual, emotional, physical and mental renovation; for times are difficult with no real end in sight.

- **So for this liturgical season of Advent that begins next week; a period of spiritual preparation in which many Christians/ spiritual discerners make themselves ready for the coming, or birth of the Lord, Jesus Christ; the way that I am discerning we may prepare is by allowing ourselves to enter into this church wide process of Holy renovation.**
- This season during our prayer time, I chose to approach things in a different manner; letting you all in on what informs my heart as your spiritual leader where I will provide weekly journal entries that will prepare us for the preached Word; for journaling is a credible means that I anticipate will create the pathway for renovation for all of us.
- **During this liturgical season**, during our Community Prayer time, I am inviting you to use the calendar of events, to jot down your own

prayers and petitions for both your family and this community in the notes sections;

- **During this liturgical season**, we will create space if you so choose; during the community prayer time or before and after the service or during the week, to come to this altar and write your prayers of commendations and supplications in this journal; a community journal that I hope will chronicle our unified commitment to stay on this boat for justice, mercy and love for all.
- The bottom line, we are better when we are united as one unified community;
- We will get through this as one unified community being lead by the Spirit of light and love;
- For now I am understanding more and more how over 5,000 people and then some, can make it off of 5 loaves and 2 fish with basketfuls left over;
- For we are survivors...
- We are Community....

- We are First United Methodist Church of Lincoln Nebraska;
- A community that has had several great pastors leading and steering this metaphorical boat;
- However the mission and vision has not changed even in that;
- For we were founded in 1888 by men and women who were devoted to Christ's teachings and dedicated to the education that Nebraska Wesleyan University ([NWU](#)) would provide the families of University Place;
- We are a community centered, focused and driven community seeking to share God's affirming love to everyone. We are a Reconciling Congregation whose story reflects a statement of diversity and love for all. First Church is inclusive to all persons regardless of education, ability, economic status, gender, race, ethnic group, age or sexual orientation.

- All which informs me that with God on our side...
the best is truly yet to come.
- Let the Church say Amen and Hallelujah!

