



Sermon Message/Series: Lights, Cinema, Scripture: The Boy who harnessed the Wind

First Lesson: Psalm 45: 10-17

Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

Preacher: Kirstie Engel

We are continuing with our Lights, Cinema, Scripture series and this week in light of our lesson and gospel this morning; we are going to look at the movie *The Boy who Harnessed the Wind...*

In addition I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge that we just celebrated the 4th of July and are still in this weekend; and believe it or not I am somehow seeing a connection as well that I would like to spend some time on a little later in the sermon.

And so let me just say first off, that on the surface, our gospel is very complex; at least for me.

For Jesus is making some rather strong statements concerning the present generation.

Statements that imply criticism....

Statements that even reflect some measure of disappointment, the way I am engaging this text.

So to unpack this text; Jesus in my mind, would have been speaking to the post-exilic generation; a generation that came well after the Israelites who wandered the wilderness.

The writer of this text; Matthew in fact, seemed to reflect a relatively wealthy urban community since he was a tax collector; so part of this community and generation that was probably among them in addition to the disciples, were "poor" and "hungry"; but not necessarily from a monetary standpoint; but the generation that would have been referred to from the Matthean perspective would be: "poor in

spirit” and those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness.” I would imagine the audience and generation that Jesus was speaking to was a mixture of both Jews and Gentile; young and old.

So to make this scriptural passage become even more relevant and even more alive for us today; the generation that I see this passage particularly referring to is us....

There is an urgent call to the millennial generation and the Gen Z or (Zoomer) generation to rise up and perhaps even wake up;

And then we have the Boomers and the Generation X folk who although we are older...we are not off the hook—because there is definitely some responsibility or ownership that all of humanity would need to consider and act upon looking at this passage of scripture....

Therefore young and old; technologically advanced or not, all races, all creeds; **the generation that Jesus is talking to is us.**

So let us dive in and see what this message or charge might be, shall we?

And so the generation in our passage of scripture that begins with a parable, was compared to that of a child; And one way to explain this parable comes from the words of The Rev. Donald Fraser who established the Independent Presbyterian Church in 1896;

Rev. Fraser gives the picture simply and vividly: “He pictured a group of little children playing at make-believe marriages and funerals. First they acted a marriage procession; some of them piping as on instruments of music, while the rest were expected to leap and dance.”

Vincent, M. R. (1887). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Vol. 1, p. 65). New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.

And so my first thought at this description, was “that’s not so bad!” Right.

Isn’t that sort of what children do?

They play; they imagine themselves in different situations; getting married, having tea parties; now the funeral aspect mentioned in both the text and his description is a little odd and morbid...but hey whatever floats their boat right?

For as a child, I don’t ever recall acting out a funeral procession.....

But it soon becomes evident that Jesus was particularly keen on fleshing this scene out for us, in a way that you or I might have never anticipated;

In fact as I settle into this passage of scripture here, this is where I find the tension of this particular passage right in this description;

That the issue with these particular children in this parable is that on the contrary; this rather whimsical image that Rev. Fraser presents is not what meets the eye.

For instead, it is implied that these are children that perhaps lack compassion...

This generation that Jesus speaks of lacks perhaps even reverence or respect.

This generation that Jesus speaks of in this textual context, lacks the fortitude, empathy and even wisdom to know **that when a flute plays, one is supposed to dance;**

To understand that when a funeral song plays, one is supposed to mourn.

As a side note, this makes me recall the news article that I came across and posted on my Facebook wall about the Alabama students who threw COVID parties to see who gets the Virus first.

My response to this article that I wrote on my FB page was NO...just NO.

I heard another case of a 30 year old man who caught the Coronavirus by drinking in a bar with his friends.

He was grateful that his life was spared because he admitted he never before took the virus seriously.

He even went as far to describe that him and his friends were drinking from the same glass or bottle at times.

And there are more cases outside of the pandemic where couples are pointing guns at a mother and her daughters in parking lots for exactly what...I still don't know;

Neighbors are calling the police on neighbors building patios with claims that they were physically assaulted; all which was not true according to the testimonies of other onlookers.....

Both of these stories involved disputes between whites and blacks...

So there is so much division in our world...

There is so much selfishness in our world.

So I am curious as I jump back into the gospel; is this the type of behavior or negligence or apathy that is being raised in this parable?

A generation who considered John the Baptist to be demon possessed;

A generation that even considered Jesus to be a glutton and a drunk, because he chose to dine and recline with tax collectors and sinners.

A generation that looked past the burdens and struggles of others in the world.....

It is a tough parable for at least for me to swallow if I am indeed capturing the sentiment behind this parable.

That this is possibly Jesus assessment of us as a generation.

And frankly, I cannot deny the truth behind this parable.

So the question becomes what are we supposed to do?

And this is when I turn to our movie that I believe might shed some light on some next steps for us living in today's world.

The Boy who Harnessed the wind....

So if you have tuned in to the movie in our sermon movie series; it tells the story of William Kamkwaba Born in Kasungu, Malawi; a young schoolboy who comes from a family of farmers who live in the nearby village of Wimbe.

William also dabbled in fixing radios for his friends and neighbors and spent his free time looking through the local junkyard for salvageable electronic components.

So although he was soon banned from attending school; due to his parents' inability to pay his tuition fees, William blackmails his science teacher into letting him continue attending his class and have access to the school's library where he learns about electrical engineering and energy production.

By the mid-2000s, failing crops due to drought and the resulting famine had devastated William's village; leading to riots over government rationing and William's family being robbed of their already meager grain stores.

People soon begin abandoning the village as a result.

And so it is the initiative that William takes upon himself

where he ended up saving his entire town.

William devised a plan to build a windmill; to power an electric water pump that he had scavenged earlier.

William built at first a small 'proof of concept' prototype which worked successfully.

Williams success became the catalyst that would lead his friends and the remaining members of the village, to build a full-size wind turbine that lead to a successful crop being sown; because of William being able to access a reliable and consistent water source.

So you see friends, this movie reveals the tremendous ability of what it looks like when a generation harnesses the wind.

In fact I would go as far to suggest that this community not only needed the present generation to rise up; their lives depended on it.

For if it wasn't for the ingenuity and creativity of this village's younger generation, chances are the famine and drought situation of that community would have only gotten worse.

And tying this revelation back to our gospel;

Even though the parable revealed some hard truths in which Jesus had assessed about the present generation that surrounded him, friends this did not mean that Jesus did not have faith that the generation could do better.

For the shift in this text in my theological mind occurs at verse 25; where the gospel says, *At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants.*

So if I could paraphrase this affirmation and put it into my own words to fit the context of our global situation; *Jesus is saying that even in all that I said about this generation I am still thankful for you.*

Jesus was saying in my biblical imagination; *I still very much believe in you.*

Because looking back one last time at the film; I am drawn to the title of the film; *The Boy who Harnessed the Wind*; particularly in the word "harness"

Because if one were to look up the word harness, one definition is the set of strappings or fittings that go over a horse; that is not the definition that I am interested in; **but**

church the second definition of harness that causes me to have the Holy Spirit tingles is defined as control and make use of (natural resources), especially to produce energy.

And so in our film, the boy William did this...he harnessed the wind....

Tying this to our gospel, Jesus is placing a charge for this generation **to harness the world**;

To harness the world in a way so that justice is produced;
To harness the world so that where those who are struggling; rest is produced....

Shifting gears slightly; You and I are in the 4th of July weekend...America's birthday;

A day where The Declaration explained why the Thirteen Colonies at war with the Kingdom of Great Britain; regarded themselves as thirteen independent sovereign states, no longer under British rule.

In Congress, July 4, 1776, The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America wrote: *When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.*

Therefore, We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.....

And I stopped to ask, who was this declaration written for?

Furthermore, why doesn't it feel like people like me and others who are included in the reconciling statement we stand for as a church are not included in this declaration? Why did a boy name William in the film we saw even have to create an energy source for accessible water to begin with?

Why didn't this town already have an accessible water source?

Why are some of us in this world tasked with carrying heavier loads than others?

Why are there some struggling more than others?

And again I don't have the answers to these questions.

I don't know why equity for all is so difficult to produce.

But what I have discerned is this much; that to the generation that Jesus speaks of...us; another clearer possibility arises out of this parable for me; where the words of our first lesson in Romans expands the parable in a way that I can relate to better....

Where Paul's prophetic words in our First lesson of Romans:7:15; recognizes within himself; being a part of a generation that possibly does not understand the impact of his own actions.

I have considered that today's generation's response to all that Jesus has said, may be like Paul; *For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. 17 But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.*

I don't know about you, but I feel this Romans text at the core of my very being...

It's real...it's raw....its honest...sometimes it feels for me unfortunately true.

But here is how our gospel responds to the generation, if we find ourselves resonating with Paul's sentiment....

Jesus as I paraphrase it says to this generation....**harness the world anyway.....**

For I have shown you the way....

I have given you new tools; tools that the former generations never had before....

I have shown you a measure of strength that you may have never known existed within you before...

I have expanded your minds and skillsets....

I have lead your ancestors through the wilderness...

I have lead the former generations through epidemics of every kind...

I have lead generations through every movement for change and inclusion for all...

*So now is your time to harness the world....
For I have created you in my image...
I have formed you in your mother's womb...
Your flesh may confine you but it does not define you....
So harness the world anyway....
Put on my yoke and learn from me...
For I'm gentle...which means you can be gentle...
I am humble...which means you can be gentle...
My yoke is easy to bear and my burden is light....
So learn from me and harness the world and together we
will redeclare our independence...
Together we will redeclare a freedom that will bring good
news to the poor; proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
And let the oppressed go free.....
Hallelujah and Amen!*

Sincerely,

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