

Sunday: June 13, 2021  
Holy Transitions Sermon Series Part 1  
Scripture Lesson: 1 Samuel 15: 34-16:13  
Preacher : Kirstie J. Engel

**We are continuing with our Holy Transition sermon series; a series designed to help us with this idea; that transitions are sometimes necessary to occur in our lives; both individually and collectively; so that we can get to the next part of our journey; so that we can fulfill our unique purpose and mission in life...**

- Because like I mentioned last week in our conversation concerning this topic;
- That most of us, if we could (I suspect); would not change anything about our lives too drastically; if it were up to us;
- For a lot of us have routines **and we enjoy our routines;**

- A lot of us have developed over time; **a comfortable and particular way of doing things** and on some level; take some pride in our methods in doing so;
- So the reason why transitions are difficult for a lot of us, is because **transitions often** requires us to step outside of our comfort zones;
- **Transitions often** holds a healthy amount of mystery to it; thereby promoting uncertainty, fear and trepidation within a lot of us because **often times**; we do not know where transitions will take us.
- **Often times**, we do not know how transitions might even change us; our worldview, our perspectives, our way of life and understanding;
- And as a result, **transitions have a way** of making us feel more vulnerable,
- **Transitions have a way** of making us become more reliant upon something even greater than us;
- And for me, this is where my theological interest is piqued;

- Because in my asking the question last week; where would you and I be if it were not for our transitions;
- I realized that transitions although they may be unsettling;
- If we approach the transitions with an open heart and mind; **I believe that our transitions** can lead us to the pathway of what it means to live as Resurrected people.
- **I believe that transitions** perhaps will even lead us to a true place of reconciliation;
- **A place of reconciliation** as it pertains to the communal relationship that our Triune God; Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer desires to have with us;
- **A place of reconciliation** as it pertains to how we see and relate to one another.
- So this is why last week, I also revealed that part of why we are spending some time talking about transitions, is because part of embracing transitions; requires you and I to learn how to embrace change;

- And so the goal of this sermon series is to invite this idea that the change that comes with transitions, is not something that we should fear or even avoid;
- But instead it's something that we must learn to trust and deem even necessary in our lives...if we wish for a true transformation to occur in our lives.
- For I thought about it; how do we expect anything that we are actively concerned with fixing and or improving in our lives to occur, if we are not open to the idea of transition?
- How do we expect to resolve anything in our day to day lives, if we are not open to transition?
- For this is where the definition of insanity becomes especially relevant;
- That if you and I keep approaching situations with the same approach and expecting different results;
- A lot of our life experiences should teach us by now, that this thought process is insane!
- So I ask again, **how do we expect** to make any progress in matters of; for instance injustice?

- **How do we expect** to amend any laws that may afflict us;
- **How do we expect** to achieve the kingdom on Earth as it is heaven; **if we are unwilling** to go through the necessary transitions that might reveal a solution;
- **If we are unwilling** to embrace the transition that just may be the way forward;
- **And so as I bring our scriptural lesson of 1 Samuel more directly into this conversation we are having together;**
- This concept of transition is what I am seeing occurring in our lesson today.
- Because last week, I lifted up that Samuel who was an upright and holy judge; was pressured to produce a king for the people, even though the people already had a king in a sense;
- For **they had** the Sovereign God who led them through the wilderness;
- Who gave them manna to eat that never ran out;

- **They had the God** who guided them in the clouds, on their transitional journey from Egypt where they were held in captivity; to the Promise Land flowing with milk and honey;
- **They had a loving God** who parted the Red Sea from the very tribe that was trying to annihilate them; the Amalekites;
- But now we learn that the Israelites ironically wanted to imitate the Amalekite's governmental strategy; (Exodus 17:8–13)
- The people demanded Samuel to give them a king just like the Amalekites; just like their captors....can you believe that?
- **They demanded a king** that would give them the results that they were not willing to patiently wait for;
- **They demanded a king** that would allow them to escape the transition of waiting for the right fit to come;

- So Samuel in consultation with God agreed to give them a king....and the appointed king for them was Saul.
- Saul; who would provide a glaring example to them and to us today, of just what unjustified self-assurance looks like at its finest.
- For Saul... did what he wanted to do.
- Saul; who scholars are still trying to discern whether he may have been more or less innocent of the charge of malicious insolence and self-will or he may have been motivated by a radical stubbornness;
- Either way I stopped by to declare that Saul was not the right king for the people.
- For **he lacked** kingdom vision;
- **He lacked** the kingdom values;
- And most importantly, **he lacked the kingdom willpower** to be able to follow what seemed to be a whether reasonable and doable first assignment;

- To get rid of all of the idols **that did not** hold reverence to the God that desired liberation for her children;
- To remove all of the idols **that did not** align with the God that made a pathway of liberation for His children;
- And so our scriptural lesson today reveals the voice of God speaking up;
- Essentially saying in laypersons terms to Samuel... **that Saul has got to go!**
- And the way that Saul was removed, is by way of a necessary transition;
- **A transition** that would invite Samuel to pursue a search for a king that would honor the vision for God's people....
- A pursuit that I would imagine took a lengthy process because **this time**, there was one criteria that had to be there according to God's instruction towards Samuel...



- **This time**, God decided to take matters into His own hands to make sure that the new king would have one characteristic; that in life normally takes time to develop and find...
- And so the characteristic that was non negotiable this time in finding the right king for the Israelites is found on verse 7 where it says *But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."*
- So the characteristic that would take a transition to find was a king **with a good heart**.
- And so we learn the king of choice would be Jesse's son David...
- David who was not perfect by any means...
- But what set David apart from all of the other prospects was David's heart....

- For in Psalm 51:10, when David as king said his well known prayer to God; *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me;*
- **What we are witnessing** is the theological consideration I have been placing before us; as it pertains to our approach to how we handle and respond to transitions; unfold right before our very eyes;
- **We are witnessing** a soon to be appointed king, model the very thing I am suggesting we all learn to do both individually and collectively; if we wish to make progress in our lives both individually and collectively;
- For **we are witnessing** someone embrace transitions so much so that he is practically begging for it to happen...
- **We are witnessing** a person who recognized that the only way he was going to be successful;
- **The only way** that he was going to be fruitful;

- **The only way** that he would be able to recover from some of his unhealthy ways and choices;
- Was by inviting some level of transition into his life to occur;
- **A transition** that would invite his heart to be transformed...
- **A transition** that would invite his leadership to be transformed;
- For what I appreciate about David was that he was very much human in every sense; we will learn over the upcoming weeks...
- **For we will witness** various parts of David's story unfold; the good, the bad and the ugly.....
- In fact, there is so much scandal that David will be responsible for, that it is hard to believe that he could even fully recover from it;
- But I stopped by to declare that he does recover from it...
- I stopped by to inform you that our work that we do must declare to this broken world; who desperately

needs repair and reconciliation; that we **can recover from it;**

- That **we can recover** from our past mistakes;
- **We can recover from** our past setbacks;
- **That we can recover** from our past disappointments; whether we are on the giving or receiving end.
- That we can recover from our abuse and our feelings of unworthiness.
- And David teaches us that we do this by being willing to enter into a much needed time of transition;
- As the ole Church mothers would sing; while we are in our time of transition;

*Just have a little talk with Jesus*

*Let us tell Him all about our troubles*

*He will hear our faintest cry and we will answer by and by*

*Now when you feel a little prayer wheel turning*

*You'll know a little fire is burning*

*You will find a little talk with Jesus makes it right...Hallelujah!*

- So you see Church, it was because of David's willingness to allow God to be the one who would lead him through this process of transition that set him a part from the rest and made him fit to be King....

- For God loved David so much...cause David was just a servant trying to pursue the heart of the Lord...
- And David was willing to stick it out through this time of transition and go through those difficult learning opportunities that would lead him to be a great king!
- **So this is where I am going to pitch my sermonic emphasis for all of us today...**
- To invite us all to consider on an individual level; what aspects of our lives could use some level of a transition?
- For our lesson reveals to us that the level of transition that we all might need to consider or revisit starts with our heart.
- So another way of asking the question that I just lifted up, is for us to hold space for what level of transition needs to occur; so that our heart might be aligned with God's?

- **I will share with you that in my own family, we are exploring a similar transition...**
- For Steve and I will be married for 5 years coming this October....
- And if I can be transparent with you, we are allowing ourselves to go through this very transition that I am naming as we speak.
- For there was a period in our marriage where it just didn't seem like we were always on the same page in our communication.
- To state it plainly; there were times in our communication where him and I would be in this gridlock/holding pattern towards one another...
- For Steve and I, both have strong personalities; which makes us appear to some as being a power couple....
- But if I can be transparent with you, we were beginning to lose some of our power, because of us coming to this fork in the road with our communication...

- So in many ways, as a marital couple, we have become like David in Psalm 51:10...
- We have invited a time of transition into our own hearts, so that we can with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, remove this gridlock that was beginning to form and take root into our relationship....
- And as a result, our relationship has reached a deeper more meaningful level of transparency, vulnerability, love and commitment towards one another.
- So this is the type of invitation I am putting out in the atmosphere for us all to keep discerning and processing both individually and collectively together;
- **A transition that begins** with the heart;
- **A transition that invites** God to be the guide;
- **A transition that I believe** will set the foundation, for the work that lies ahead as we continue to strive to pursue a ministry that reflects doing justice, walking humbly and staying in love with God.
- Let the Church say Amen!

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Sunday: June 13, 2021  
Holy Transitions Sermon Series Part 2  
First Lesson: Psalm 20  
Gospel Lesson: Mark 4: 26-34  
Preacher : Kirstie J. Engel

**We are continuing with our Holy Transition series; a series inviting us to consider that transitions are necessary in our lives both individually and collectively; if we wish to make progress towards our work of doing justice, loving mercy and staying in love with God.**

- And so I will pick up with my train of thought from Part 1 of our message today in the earlier service;
- And the idea that I was tossing around is that not only are transitions necessary for our growth as individuals and as a church...
- But in many ways with making this theological declaration, then I suppose I am also naming **that**



**transitions are something** that should be embraced and not avoided.

- **Transitions are something** to be in many ways eagerly anticipated and not feared.
- For although when you and I are typically going through transitions in our lives;
- Transitions, often times do not feel safe for many of us; mainly because of all of the unknowns that our transitions tends to hold;
- I would suggest however, that in most cases, if we were to look back on the transitions that we have had to endure, we may discover that our lives have been improved and enriched as a result.
- For the longer I live, I am convinced that the transitions that we have been faced with are there; to keep us moving forward in our lives with purpose and meaning....
- For if you think about it; **our lives** are like that of a story or a book with many chapters...
- **Our lives** are created in a way where at some point, the metaphorical page of our stories need to be turned or flipped.

- **For our lives** were not meant to be stuck on the preface or the introduction portion of our metaphorical stories.
- As a side note, this is why when we interact with people, we should never attempt to have glanced merely at their preface and then make assumptions that we know their story fully.
- For just as the gospel artist John P. Kee has sung in his song Life and Favor;
  - You don't know my story;
  - You don't know the things that I've come through;
  - I'm delivered, here's my story
  - Life and favor upon me, he brought me out
  - You don't know it, let me tell it
  - Life and favor upon me, he brought me out
  - God of mercy, he who loves me
  - Life and favor upon me, he brought me out
- So this is a long way of naming that each of our lives represents a beautiful story that is **meant to be lived and told**; just as God's story of love and redemption is a story **meant to be lived and told**.

- So transitions are there in our lives to ensure that our story is told.
- I am even working on this idea that transitions are God's gift to us **to make sure that our story is told.**
- Because I still stand by my original statement last week, that if it were up to most of us, we would not change....for it is our human nature to resist change.
- However, I feel called to challenge our resistance in this area as it pertains to change.
- Why?
- Well I have thought a lot about this and I have come to this epiphany as it pertains to the Church and the role of the Church;
- That **if it is our desire** to do the work of justice;
- **If it is our desire** to love mercy;
- **If it is our desire** to love as God loves us and share this love to a world who desperately needs the reconciling ministry of repair, reform and restoration;
- Then **how do we expect** to make progress in this work, if we are resistant to this idea of transition?

- **How do we expect** to reform corrupt systems if we are not willing to be subjected to some measure of reform ourselves?
- Furthermore, this is why in the earlier service, we are sticking with the lessons of 1 Samuel for a while.
- This is mainly because we get to witness a person model what embracing transitions and the change that comes with transitions unfold right before our very eyes.
- For so far we have journeyed with our Israelite friends, who have determined as a group; that they did not want to commit to the time of transition that it takes to reform their own situation....
- So even though the Sovereign God helped the people to get out of Egypt;
- It was because of their impatience with God's timing and resistance to this necessary transition of keeping them out of captivity;
- That they essentially found themselves right back into captivity in a sense;
- For the same captors that tried to take their lives at the Red Sea; the Amalekites;

- The Israelites solution to their circumstance was to ask for a king, just like the one of the Amalekites; isn't that something?!
- Furthermore, in the free will fashion that God tends to allow things to happen; God granted their wish and gave them a king named Saul.
- Over time, it became apparent that Saul was not the right king for the people; for Saul was only looking out for himself.
- So God does eventually intervene and leads Samuel in a period of transition to seek out a king cut from God's own heart.
- And the lengthy pursuit of this righteous king led Samuel's search to David.
- And although David was not perfect by any means; for David made a lot of mistakes personally and poor choices;
- What set David apart from the rest, was his willingness to enter into a time of transition himself.
- In Psalm 51:10, David earnestly pleaded with God to grant him a clean heart and to renew his Spirit.

- Through this act, David shows us all that **if we wish** to seek reform;
- **If it is our desire** to pursue justice,
- **If we hope to have** progress in our work; and be transformed by this work;
- Then this begins with us;
- It begins with an intentional focus of us being willing to enter **into a time of transition;**
- **A time of transition** where we can assess who we are and whose we are;
- **A time of transition** where we invite God to lead us into our own personal repair; so that we can do the work of the repair.
- **A time of transition** that once we do this hard work within ourselves with the help of the Holy Spirit;
- **Then we can come together to collectively achieve this major transition that is being revealed in our gospel today.**
- For in our gospel we are seeing a description of God's idea of the world unfold right before our very eyes;

- And here we are being introduced a term that I use often and it is in our Lord's prayer as well; the kingdom of God.
- And so the term kingdom of God is a rather abstract term in my opinion.
- For in lifting up, our new Associate Pastor Caity Bentzinger was just Commissioned yesterday as a Provisionary Elder in the Great Plains Conference;
- And one of the questions that she had to discern and all pastors through the Methodist connection has to discern and keep discerning; is naming what the kingdom of God is.
- Is the kingdom of God something that we only experience in heaven upon our death?
- Is the kingdom of God even achievable on Earth?
- And for me, I will emphatically answer that yes the kingdom of God is achievable on Earth.
- **It is when churches** however stop pursuing this kingdom of God, is when our viability becomes a major concern.

- **It is when we stop seeking** this kingdom of God, when we may as well proactively close the doors of the Church once and for all.
- For the kingdom of God paints a vision of God's infinite love for all of her children.
- So the kingdom of God as the gospel reveals to us in this parable is not only achievable, but it is fertile;
- For in one mustard seed, 1 to 2 millimetres (0.039 to 0.079 in) in diameter; our parable tells us as it pertains to the kingdom of God; that once it is sown; it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." (V32)
- So what this tells me is that heck yes the kingdom of God can be achieved on Earth as it is in heaven.
- But just as it will take us individually like David entering into a time of transition; to invite our individual hearts to be transformed;
- It will take us coming together collectively as a church; being willing to go through that same time of transition;



- To invite God to teach us how to reform the heart of the Church; to ensure that it lines up with the heart of the kingdom;
- With the idea that this process of sanctification that I am naming...getting to the heart of who we are as both individuals and collectively....**it takes time.**
- **For it takes time** to purge out some of those things that are not of the loving nature of God within us both individually and collectively....
- **It takes time** to even wrap our minds around this idea that such a transition is needed and necessary; so that we can do the work of God.
- But Church I am committed to this process of transition...
- I am committed, because I believe that once we are mindful about doing this; that the kingdom of God becomes that much more visible and nearer to us.
- I believe that as we continue to strive to embrace these types of transitions; that this is when the doors of reconciliation, repair, restoration and resurrection truly begins to open up.

- **And as a tangible example of what embracing these transitions can do for our work as a community; I am reflecting on the Time of Remembrance that we held for Sharon Johnson this past Thursday; a beloved member of our community, whose life was tragically ended one fateful day on a bus ride commute almost a year ago; where Sharon was the only passenger on the bus at the time.**
- For Sharon's life ended at the hand of senseless gun violence.
- Furthermore, the pandemic just began during the time of our tragic loss and so at the time, we were not holding funerals within our church.
- Now that we are getting back to some sense of normalcy, Sharon's family was ready to hold some type of gathering.
- In planning this gathering though, Sharon's sister was transparent and honest with me and for this I am so grateful;

- Because had she not been; I don't think the Church as a whole would have experienced the much needed kingdom of God moment that we did.
- So Sharon's sister revealed to me in conversation, that she was not a religious person although Sharon was as we know.
- So it was important for Sharon's family to have a type of gathering that would honor her life, but also make space for their comfort level as well.
- At this, the Holy Spirit had me entertain a model that was not particularly traditional to the way that we as a church normally conducts Celebration of Life services.
- To be honest with you, I was downright nervous at the direction that I felt called to go as it pertained to how we should celebrate Sharon's life;
- And so what I felt called to do in a way to make space for Sharon's family, was to ensure that where we gathered was not in our sanctuary or even our West Vestry or chapel space.
- Instead, I explored a service downstairs in Fellowship Hall.

- In Fellowship Hall we had food; but normally food happens after the service in the sanctuary, before the graveside service.
- I felt lead to host a buffet style meal along with having our Celebration of Life team make cookies and punch and have everyone eat first; with live music playing in the background; so graciously done by Alicia, Malcolm and Mike.
- We made fliers for the event on Social Media; and made sure that fliers were across the street at Lincoln Manor where Sharon lived to invite some of her friends over.
- Instead of scriptures, we had readings of poems that best celebrated Sharon's life.
- The homily/sermon was the best part because it literally came from the community;
- I kicked off a memory of Sharon and then opened it up to her family to share and then the rest of the community joined in as they felt lead.
- Afterwards, we went upstairs and did a ceremony of pouring Sharon's ashes on the church grounds;

- The spoken liturgy for this time was a combination of powerful quotes and Church liturgy.
- The Holy moment was in the data; for we served at least 75-100 persons; all on different levels of faith understanding; all from various parts of our community; Star Tran, Lincoln Manor and more;
- It was an intergenerational and spiritually diverse combination of people coming together; atheist, agnostic, spiritual but not religious and traditional; breaking bread together and sharing common ground; our love for Sharon along with the expressed desire for nothing like this to affect another human being; that connected us together.
- It was truly a holy moment;
- Giving us a glimpse of what the kingdom of God can look like at it's finest;
- A mustard seed opportunity that began to reveal to us as a community; how we might begin the process of reaching people where they are.

- For me the whole experience was similar to what the disciples must have experienced that day on the walk to Emmaus Road;

- Where in Luke 24 beginning at verse 13

**It tells us that** on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles[a] from Jerusalem, **14** and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. **15** While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, **16** but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

- **But it wasn't until that moment where they were able to break bread with this stranger were they able to see the kingdom potential;**

- **For Verse 30 says** When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. **31** Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. **32** They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

- Making it quite obvious that perhaps the mental/spiritual transition that we need to make as a church, is by making sure that our ministry allows space for our hearts to burn for Jesus teachings and ways;
- It is by allowing us to evolve into this spiritual space of transition that invites us to consider that sometimes; often times it doesn't even require all of the pomp and circumstances we tend to put in as an organization as a whole;
- But just a mustard seed; a heartfelt desire or idea; a simple gesture; a seemingly small act of love; is all it takes to keep the kingdom alive and before us;
- Letting us know that the kingdom of God is doable when you think about it;
- Revealing to us that the kingdom of God is even attainable; as long as it comes from the heart.
- For the Kingdom of God is Here....The Kingdom of God is Now!
- Let the Church say Amen!