

Holy Movement: Sunday July 18, 2021 8:30

Scripture Lesson: 2 Samuel 7: 1-14a

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

We are continuing with our Holy Movement Series; a series seeking to begin identifying our next moves of how we might do the work of Reconciliation within our communities on both an individual and collective level; with the aid of the Holy Spirit guiding us.

- This morning I would like to spend some time on the individual; as we continue the story of David trying to figure out what do with this Ark.
- And so last week as I attempt to give a brief recap of where this conversation started and where we are headed; David's story taught us a

valuable lesson of what it means to literally “put the cart before the horse,”

- For David came up with the idea to place the Ark on a new cart; which proved to be not the best idea as it would prove to be unstable;
- We learned that it was also not the best idea especially since the Ark was designed by God to be carried by the people.
- Now as a leader who aspires to lead a fruitful and effective ministry; I expressed being able to relate with David for wanting to put the Ark on the cart in the first place;
- **For the Ark was heavy;**
- And one of my considerations from this story as to why David thought of this grand idea of using a cart versus the hands of the people to carry it, was because of perhaps not having anyone willing to carry the ark ;

- I used the concept of the Ark; serving as a powerful imagery and metaphor for the Church.
- I then named the scripture of Matthew 9:37; as being a relevant problem for not just the Church, but for businesses as well; this idea that the harvest is plentiful, and the workers are few....especially since we are still in the midst of a pandemic.
- And so one of the ideas to address the harvest needs for our community, was by planting five vision boards entitled prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness; which contains the 5 aspects of our membership vows; along with listing ministry opportunities in those categories for people to sign up for; so that we all can be trained on how to carry this “ark” together.

- As a side note, I will remind everyone that this ministry fair will be up for the duration of this sermon series; 4 weeks to be exact.
- I am pleased to announce that we have a lot of signatures which is a tremendous start;
- However, why I lead with this opening video for this week's discussion; a video that I will call "Holy Movements captured at the zoo;"
- Is because there is another powerful imagery that I am seeing emerge within these beautiful creatures; that I am hoping will positively impact those still exploring what their next move might be within the Church and beyond;

- **So allow me to unpack this video and see if we can also find some connections with David's Ark dilemma at the same time;**
- So my family and I took an impromptu trip to the Omaha zoo last Wednesday since we now have a zoo pass;
- It was coming close to closing time for the zoo and it was looking like it was about to rain;
- You heard the zookeeper on the video say that the giraffes do not like the rain, and so they were trying to get the giraffes across the way **into shelter.**
- Now why I was motivated to capture this all on video is because I frankly never witnessed this before; so I just sensed it would be something that I would want to capture.
- After watching this video for now at least the 10th time in preparation for this morning

sermon's; let's just say I am so glad that I did take the time to capture this on video is because I realized after about the third time watching the video; that it served as a powerful imagery that will inform our work for both the individual and collective level for the work that lies ahead.

- For you remember last week, I also made the observation that when the Bible says that if we were to have faith the size of a mustard seed; we can tell a mountain to move from here to there and it will move (Matthew 17:20); that the Bible was most likely talking about the mountains being people; for it is difficult to inspire people to move from point A to B for a myriad of reasons that I will not go into for this sermon....
- Now why I am excited about this video is because I think that these giraffes really highlight

what our movements can look like at its finest; when inviting people into the work of reconciliation or any type of movement for that matter; that requires some level of transition, change or unknown.

- For in my eyes, what awaited the giraffes on the other side of that walkway that they were encouraged to walk towards, represents similarly to what awaits us all when we enter into the work of the reconciling ministry;
- There are some unknowns;
- There may even be some uncertainties;
- At least from the giraffes perspective in this clip....for although I am sure they do this maneuver daily; most likely multiple times at that;
- For some of our gentle giants; there still seemed to be some hesitancy or resistance to walk over

there; even if it provided a promising shelter from the rain.

- For **the first giraffe** that we saw cross the walkway; the zookeeper motioned for her to walk over and she did so without hesitation;
- **The second giraffe Zola**, walked over with almost no hesitation, but first she had to make sure that she nibbled some of the trees before doing so;
- The third giraffe....the baby...sprinted across the walkway; that was one of the cutest sights I had ever seen by the way...
- However **the fourth giraffe**...Leila; had a whole other plan as we just saw.
- For Leila walked up half-way; stops....tried to sniff to see what was on the other side; turned back and went the way she came;

- If it weren't for being enclosed at the entrance of where she started; I am not even certain if she would not have just chosen to stay on the other side; even if it meant getting stuck out in the rain.
- What we saw though is that Leila was stuck at the entrance; eating on a tree; taking her sweet time;
- It wasn't until another worker pulled up in a vehicle that Leila slowly took her time walking across the pathway to the other side.
- Church family, these four giraffes I believe capture what some of us may be experiencing right now as we consider the way forward;
- For in our case; we really do not know what awaits us on the other side do we?
- Or sometimes in tying our story into our discussion; some of us are like David who has

experienced a temporary setback; for his new cart ministry idea did not work as he had hoped'

- So instead of pressing forward with trying to get the Ark to be carried by the people; instead he decided to place the ark in a shelter; to avoid making another mistake.
- Now part of David's motivation for doing this was admirable for the Bible tells us that his intentions were to make sure that his shelter was not better than the housing for the Ark;
- For David did revere the Ark as Holy;
- But my aha moment in both my giraffe story and the continuation of David's Ark dilemma is that in both cases; both the giraffes and Ark were meant to continue moving forward.
- For God informed David just that;
- You see God's lavish graciousness is exemplified in this text, where God makes it

abundantly clear that in addition to all that God has done for David, God will continue to do more....

- But I stopped by to suggest that God cannot do this in the confines of a box; no more than can we expect to contribute to the kingdom on Earth as it is in heaven; if we choose to remain in our own confined structures or bubbles.
- So in God's response by way of the prophet Nathan to David; the first thing God explains is that God never commanded any of Israel's leaders to build a house.
- God on the contrary seemed to be just fine with the tabernacle.
- And this is because God deigns to dwell in temples consisting of human lives fulfilling divine purposes, rather than lavish temples made with human hands.

- David Lose a theologian said it best in his book *Preaching at the Crossroads* where he says ‘God is still active, not only in beauty of the natural world, but also in our broken and grace-filled relationships and roles as friend, partner, student, employer and employee, citizen, volunteer and more.’
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- Furthermore, my aha moment through living my own life experiences informs me, that God is not going to invite any of us to move anywhere without God being right there with us;
- For when I look over my own life; whether I was on the metaphorical mountain top singing the praises of the Lord; or in the valley crying my eyes out...God was always there...
- **For God was there** when I took my first breath;

- **God was there** when my children were in the hospital on different occasions throughout their lives;
- **God was there** when I preached my dad's Home going service;
- **God was there** when I struggled with not knowing what my next move would be as it pertained to accepting my pastoral call, choosing my lifelong mate and more....
- **God was there**...God was always there.....
- You see from my perspective it is us that typically tries to put God in a box; similar to how we often try to limit our own movements in our own safe structures.
- But our text informs us; that God does not desire to dwell in any other housing but the housing that includes our own minds and hearts;
- For God is active;

- God is on the move;
- Which is a long way of my naming that when I as your Spiritual Leader am inviting you into this work....
- I know that this is an invitation that can invoke a lot of fear, unknowns and mystery;
- For reflecting on that giraffe video one last time; there are many times I feel like Leila myself;
- For I know that what awaits on the other side is not something I completely understand or even feel qualified to even do;
- However, I am reminded that we were created to keep it moving;
- And the good news is that God who had the choice in our story to remain in safe isolation;
- The good news is that God chooses to come with us;

- Thereby adding a whole other meaning to the scripture that tells us that we serve a God *who will never leave us nor forsake us* in our journeys. (Deut. 31:6)
- Thanks be to God that we do not walk alone!

Holy Movement: Sunday July 18 2021 10:45

First Lesson: 2 Samuel 7: 1-14a

Gospel Lesson: Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56

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where we are headed; David's story taught us a valuable lesson of what it means to literally "put the cart before the horse,"

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- God on the contrary seemed to be just fine with the tabernacle.
- And this is because God deigns to dwell in temples consisting of human lives fulfilling divine purposes, rather than lavish temples made with human hands.

- Furthermore, my aha moment in experiencing how God has already moved within this own community of First, that God is not going to invite any of us to move anywhere without God being right there with us;
- For when I look at how far we have come from as a Church; God has always been there...
- **For God was there** when the roof collapsed;
- **God was there** at the beginning of this pandemic and our Church was nowhere near capable of being technologically ready for it; but God moved through the hearts of the people; and look at us now; worship screens; new sound system and more;
- **God was there** when we have had to say goodbye to a variety of Church members who have passed on; but still we are able to come together in fellowship and our memories; all that

ensures that their legacy that they have left behind will be always active and alive before us;

- **God has been there** with our leaders;
- **God has been there** with our worship teams;
- God has been there with our youth and children as they have had to figure out how to continue on with their schooling either in person or virtual or a hybrid of both;
- **God has been there** in our communities; in our hospitals; in our government and more!
- **God has been there;**
- **God was there...**God was always there.....God is here; Active and alive!
- You see from my perspective it is us that typically tries to put God in a box; similar to how we often try to limit our own movements in our own safe structures.

- But again our first lesson reminds us that the reason why we know the God is here; because God chose to be here;
- David tried to put God in a confined shelter, but God said to David; “no sir..I want to come with you!”
- **And so where the Gospel message fits into all of this; is we are seeing what happens as a collective Body; when we begin to move forward in our work together ; trusting that God is with us every step of the way.**
- God begins to move in the people; because the people have come together for the good of those who love the Lord and are operating under one unified vision;
- A unified vision that focuses on reconciling the kingdom back to a place of unity;
- A unified vision where all can be fed and fed well;

- A unified vision where the sanctity and worth of all human beings are a real priority;
- So for me the miracle of this story is not that people that day were healed per se.
- The miracle of the story for me was that people were able to come together in all of their prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness; a holy movement that I am desperate to be a part of ;
- For in a world that is always being threatened by some sort of dichotomy;
- Vaccinated versus unvaccinated;
- One race of people versus another race of people;
- Masked versus unmasked;
- The Haves verses the have-nots;
- And many more dreadful Schisms to come;

- The good news that our gospel teaches us is that bringing people together of all walks of life and beliefs is possible.....
- Furthermore, David Lose a theologian in his book *Preaching at the Crossroads* says ‘God is still active, not only in beauty of the natural world, but also in our broken and grace-filled relationships and roles as friend, partner, student, employer and employee, citizen, volunteer and more.’”
- So with these two truths working together; that people can still be brought together and that God is active in these relationships that are brought together;
- This is what invites me to keep taking steps towards this work;

- This is what invites me into a place of tremendous hope even in the midst of all of this chaos and despair;
- Because I know what is possible; when people come together with the Spirit unifying them under a common good called love;
- Mountains begin to move;
- Lives become transformed;
- Blessings begin to overflow;
- Systems of repair and healing begin to be formed that let's people know that they are truly seen and heard;
- Amplifying that the best is truly yet to Come;
- So the prayer is that we become like that baby giraffe; eagerly rushing when it's zookeeper calls her by name;
- For we know and trust that what lies ahead;
- Although there is uncertainty;

- Although it is unknown;
 - The zookeeper shows us that it is safe;
 - The zookeeper in fact knows that over there, we will find true shelter...
-
- So come over here and taste and see that the Lord is Good; God's Mercy Endures Forever!
 - Let everyone who has ears to hear and a witness to share; be willing to take these steps... together!