

Sunday August 29, 2021

Scriptural Lesson: Song of Solomon 2: 8-13

Sermon Series: Holy Momentum Part 1

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

We are continuing our third week of our Holy Momentum series; a series designed to help all of us with this concept, of once we have stepped outside of our comfort zones, bubbles/boxes from the Holy Movement series; now the goal in this series has been to identify what it means to build momentum, keep momentum and sustain our momentum for the work of reconciliation that lies ahead.

- As a side note, I am hoping that people are finding some meaningful connections and tools within these sermons; to recognize that what we have been talking about, does not just apply in our work

within the church; but also in our homes, work settings, families and more.

- So I thank you, for staying connected in the way that you have been; because on a personal note... I know that I have been blessed by what the Spirit has been revealing to us.
- I hope that the feeling is mutual on your part as well.
- So looking at what we have done thus far in this series; for the past couple of weeks, we have been spending some time with Solomon as a leader, on what our work looks like as we build and keep our momentum in our work of ministry and reconciliation.
- We have identified through Solomon, that how you and I **build momentum** in our work begins with our mindset; understanding that the goal of getting our mindset as strong and ready as can

be, begins with us seeking wisdom, from none other than the guidance of the Holy Spirit on how to do so.

- For it was this same desired wisdom, that would lead Solomon to build a temple for the people to be able to pray, fellowship worship and essentially find reconciliation with God and with one another.
- Secondly, we have identified that how we **keep our momentum** in our work, is by staying connected through prayer with God, who will reveal to us our next steps in our work.
- And so through the prayer of Solomon, he provided a profound reality for what our future would entail as a Church who also is rebuilding;
- For Solomon's prayer revealed this reality that the temple that he and the people were called to build, would not just be for the Israelites, **but for the foreigners too.**

- I identified last week that although the term foreigner is a pretty controversial term in today's time;
- For the term "foreigner" is a trigger that has incited all sorts of emotions within us.
- For instance as a country and good portion of our world; we are experiencing an even more complex, heightened level of emotions, with new developments in Afghanistan; with the most recent Kabul Airport Attack;
- An attack that killed 13 US Service Members and at least 90 Afghans; with now the U.S. on alert for further Kabul attacks; letting us know that the coming days will be the most dangerous;
- Solomon, **is still clear** that the temple was meant and intended for the **foreigner as well;**
- So **even though** biblically, the term foreigner, referred to anybody who was from another ethnic

group but had chosen to live with the Jews in Israel — no matter what category they might represent in today's terms.

- **And Even though** the foreigners may or may not have posed a threat to their society;
- There is a clear and embedded call for us biblically, to acknowledge and make space for others, who may not be from our same ethnic, religious, socio economic background.
- Furthermore, it was this sobering revelation; and I use the term sobering, because there is a lot of uncertainties that do come, when other backgrounds of people come together in the same space;
- Where I then presented the sign on our lawn; a sign that proclaims that “All Are Welcome Here” with a rainbow flower on it;

- A powerful symbol, where I as your Spiritual leader has ascertained after working more than two years in this ministry setting; a corroborating statement that First United Methodist Church is naming, that is similar to that of Solomon's prayer;
- A statement that says that essentially our Church is open to all that **the rainbow** might bring into our space.
- **A rainbow that for some**, represents Pride and Acceptance for the LGBTQ community;
- **A rainbow that represents** for some, Racial inclusion and harmony...
- **A rainbow that represents biblically**, an overall awareness that there is a covenant of God's affirming love for all people;
- Regardless of education, ability, economic status, gender, race, ethnic group, age or sexual orientation;

- Which means that as a Church, we then recognize that our mission is to make sure that this space is truly welcoming...which we are learning is not always easy to do...when we begin to dig into the nuts and bolts of what this rainbow really means.
- And so then looking at our text today, which deviates from King Solomon's leadership of the Israelites and the temple building project;
- **Our text is revealing to us more of the heart of Solomon with the Song of Solomon...**
- So the reason why I chose this text of our study today is because number one, preachers do not get to preach from the Song of Solomon very often if they are a lectionary preacher such as myself.
- So part of my motivation in preaching this text is that I wanted to step outside of my own comfort zone in doing so.

- The other reason why I chose this scripture for our discussion today, is because I am beginning to see how you and I might move into our third goal of sustaining our moment for our reconciling work...
- Before revealing this point, let me give some background on what I see happening in our scripture today.
- So few books in Scripture have given rise to such conflicting views as has the Song of Solomon.
- For this book has been looked upon throughout Christian and Jewish history by most biblical scholars as a problem.
- This is because its frank description describes the intimate love of a maiden and her beloved.
- However, there is an absence of obvious religious themes.

- Not to mention, it is difficult to determine the identity and sequence of speakers.
- Some scholars felt that this text was probably a wedding song in honor of Solomon's marriage to an Egyptian princess,
- Others viewed this book as an allegorical expression of divine love; where the relationship of Israel and God is seen as that of a bride and groom.
- Most scholars would accept that the Song of Songs is attributed to Solomon; whether we choose to take this book literally or allegorically.
- **Why I am drawn to this passage is because of verse 8 in particular where it says; *The voice of my beloved!***
- For in continuing with my train of thought of last week, in naming that our work identifies an

understanding that the **rainbow will show up and is doing so in our church....**

- I also named that although sometimes the colors of the rainbow overlap and blend into one another; thereby making our work sometimes difficult to reconcile within ourselves this tension that arises; when the rainbow actually shows up;
- I also declared that even in this acknowledgement, that in my eyes the **rainbow is still radiant and brilliant.**
- Bringing this week's lesson into our conversation (as I also am choosing to take an allegorical, 2021 application of understanding of this passage of scripture; replacing Israel with our ministerial context); I am seeing that God would also deem this rainbow to be radiant and brilliant...
- In my eyes, God is seeing the same rainbow that I have been naming as God's own beloved!

- Just as a groom would see his bride...
- Church family, we who are all in this rainbow, in some way, shape or form in our own stories, through our own brokenness, in our own diversity and more...God deems us as God's beloved....
- Furthermore, why I am most especially interested in this text and what I am seeing will be a major part of how we sustain our work of affirming this rainbow culture we are striving to embody, embrace and live into, is that now our scripture is informing us **that Israel is speaking up...**
- Now our text is informing us **that the Rainbow is speaking up....**
- And so this is where our work gets even more intense in my eyes, as if keeping our momentum in this work isn't tricky enough;
- Part of our sustaining work as a Church as I see it, will be in recognizing that once the rainbow shows

up....in a matter of time the rainbow will speak
up...

- And so what this means for us as a Church, is that the most challenging part of our work will be holding and keeping space, **for the rainbow to be able to speak....**
- And this is where the rubber is going to meet the road for some of us I would imagine.
- For so long as a Church, there was typically one universal voice **that was able to speak.**
- As I attempt to give some background on what my most recent class in my doctoral studies revealed to us students, is this awareness that you and I; we are all experiencing a cultural shift.
- The best and simplest way that I can name this cultural shift is in terms of naming that we are currently living in a world, where there is this dichotomy that reveals that we are standing in the

middle of two different ages/eras that are competing with one another; I'm talking about the Analog world and the Digital World.

- In class, we would group this as the Modern and post modern world.
- So to put this in simpler terms...what I am naming is that there is this tension between the Gutenberg bible generation and the Google generation;
- I am talking about digital and print....
- Vinyl records and iTunes.... Although vinyl records are making a come back.... I am still contemplating buying a record player and some records at Barnes and Nobles.
- In the church, there is a competing tension between worship screens and hymnals;
- Printed newsletters and electronic newsletters...
- And it just doesn't stop there folks;

- For in the modern era of our world from a religious perspective; most of us in this era has operated under one Universal Truth of one Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and a male preacher who would deliver the message that this Triune God would have to say to the people.
- Before bibles were even available in print to the people, the ones who were interested in religion, relied on a group of men; typically, white men; to instruct us on what the Bible had to say.
- And don't even get me started on how the Bible was even put together.... That is worth a 12 week study all in itself!
- So fast forwarding to the post modern era we are in right now; we all have access to the printed Bible.
- However, post modernity has revealed an overall rejection to there being a Universal truth that we

are to live by or that is even dictated by the authority of the preacher.

- Instead, post modernity rests on this idea that the human experience shapes our truths.
- Post modernity is an era that invites people to be free to explore and inquire their inner truth through multiple means beyond the Bible; which does not negate the presence of God or the Bible itself; but recognizes that there are other sources that inform our spirituality and faith.
- So the post modern age invites people into a more experiential relationship with God that is multifaceted.
- So this is the cliff notes version to the tension that I am naming, but hopefully this is something we can all keep learning about and naming.

- However, one can see why these two eras would compete both beyond the church and within the church.
- Furthermore, I am not here to name one era right or one era wrong;
- But I am here to name that this shift is happening and has been happening, whether we like it or not.
- This cultural shift is occurring in the rainbow we wish to seek and reach;
- And the sobering news is that I haven't even begun to dig into the nuts and bolts of what else that rainbow entails...
- For we haven't really talked about all of the isms in that rainbow...
- We haven't really talked about all of the stories in that rainbow...
- The stories of oppression,
- The stories of marginalization,

- The stories that remind us just how human we really are....
- Some stories are beautiful,
- Some stories are inspiring,
- Some stories are really, really good to hear.
- But what about the other stories that are hard to hear?
- I'm thinking of UNL and the protesting that has been going on because these victims of sexual assault, rape and victimization have been silenced and/or dismissed far too long....
- I'm thinking of this relentless virus, and the stories of the vaccinated and unvaccinated colliding together in an uproar that is so audible that it is deafening;
- I'm thinking of the stories from California; the sheer terror of wild fires and droughts;

- I'm thinking of the stories from Louisiana who has to now deal with battling a hurricane and this virus at the same time.
- I'm thinking of the stories that may even be in this worship space right now;
- I'm thinking about your stories, my story, our story;
- I'm thinking of all of the stories that haven't even been told that are still informing this work; that are contained in that rainbow.
- Are we ready to hear these stories?
- Are we ready to listen to these voices?
- Can we make space for these stories to be fully told?
- What would the world look like if these stories could be told?
- What could our Church look like if these stories could be told?

- Perhaps we may discover the possibilities as I read our text one last time; with the prayer that we might have a new set of ears to really listen;

The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills.

9 My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.

Look, there she stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice.

10 My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away;

11 for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.

12 The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

13 The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

- Let the Church say Amen!

Sunday August 29, 2021

First Lesson: Song of Solomon 2: 8-13

Gospel Lesson: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

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these sermons; to recognize that what we have been talking about, does not just apply in our work within the church; but also in our homes, work settings, families and more.

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- And so this is where our work gets even more intense in my eyes, as if keeping our momentum in this work isn't tricky enough;
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contemplating buying a record player and some records at Barnes and Nobles.

- In the church, there is a competing tension between worship screens and hymnals;
- Printed newsletters and electronic newsletters...
- And it just doesn't stop there folks;
- For in the modern era of our world from a religious perspective; most of us in this era has operated under one Universal Truth of one Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and a male preacher who would deliver the message that this Triune God would have to say to the people.
- Before bibles were even available in print to the people, the ones who were interested in religion, relied on a group of men; typically, white men; to instruct us on what the Bible had to say.

- And don't even get me started on how the Bible was even put together.... That is worth a 12 week study all in itself!
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- Post modernity is an era that invites people to be free to explore and inquire their inner truth through multiple means beyond the Bible; which does not negate the presence of God or the Bible itself; but recognizes that there are other sources that inform our spirituality and faith.

- So the post modern age invites people into a more experiential relationship with God that is multifaceted.
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- But I am here to name that this shift is happening and has been happening, whether we like it or not.
- This cultural shift is occurring in the rainbow we wish to seek and reach;
- And the sobering news is that I haven't even begun to dig into the nuts and bolts of what else that rainbow entails...

- For we haven't really talked about all of the isms in that rainbow...
- We haven't really talked about all of the stories in that rainbow...
- The stories of oppression,
- The stories of marginalization,
- The stories that remind us just how human we really are....
- Some stories are beautiful,
- Some stories are inspiring,
- Some stories are really, really good to hear.
- But what about the other stories that are hard to hear?
- I'm thinking of UNL and the protesting that has been going on because these victims of sexual assault, rape and victimization have been silenced and/or dismissed far too long....

- I'm thinking of this relentless virus, and the stories of the vaccinated and unvaccinated colliding together in an uproar that is so audible that it is deafening;
- I'm thinking of the stories from California; the sheer terror of wild fires and droughts;
- I'm thinking of the stories from Louisiana who has to now deal with battling a hurricane and this virus at the same time.
- I'm thinking of the stories that may even be in this worship space right now;
- I'm thinking about your stories, my story, our story;
- I'm thinking of all of the stories that haven't even been told that are still informing this work; that are contained in that rainbow.
- Are we ready to hear these stories?
- Are we ready to listen to these voices?

- Can we make space for these stories to be fully told?
- What would the world look like if these stories could be told?
- What could our Church look like if these stories could be told?
- How I see the gospel coming into this conversation is that we see typically how the Church has responded to these stories from the other before.
- The Church as a whole has typically responded in judgment.
- For when statements from our gospel says things such as, “they (Pharisees/Scribes) noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them,” or in verse 5 of our gospel where it says, So the Pharisees and the scribes (blatantly) asked him (Jesus),

"Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"

- This defilement that the gospel is naming on the surface seems as if it is merely contextual;
- I stopped by to suggest as a voice of the marginalized that this defilement is not contextual for me.
- For there is not a day that goes by, especially when I am in these cross- cultural spaces that I do not fear and/or suspect that some may view me as defiled;
- There is not a day that goes by, where I suspect that others who have been placed along the margins for a myriad of reasons do not feel as if others may also view them as defiled;
- So I wonder what would our church look like if the rainbow could speak and not be viewed and treated as defiled?

- Perhaps we may discover the possibilities as I read our text one last time; with the prayer that we might have a new set of ears to really listen;

The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills.

9 My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.

Look, there she stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice.

10 My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away;

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13 The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

- Arise oh beautiful rainbow, let your light shine;
- For your colors are radiant... your colors are beautiful!

- Let the Church say Amen!

