

**November 28, 2021**

**First Lesson: Psalm 25: 1-9**

**Gospel Lesson: Luke 21: 25-36**

**Sermon Series: Holy Renovation**

**Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel**

KJ Journal, November 24, 2021:

It feels good to feel good again. My truth is that prior to; I haven't felt good for some time now. If I am honest, I really think that what I have been experiencing is a delayed response to all of the events that have been happening both in the world and in my family. For when the pandemic first hit, I instantly went into survival mode; making sure that myself and the team could keep the Church afloat. When my grandmother died, I really did not feel that I could grieve for her; because in truth I didn't feel as if I could afford the time to grieve her. Not to mention, the struggles with the restaurant and my

mother-in-law getting sick and us having to relocate her...I never felt that I had the time to do anything but just keep surviving. A lot of my colleagues took a renewal leave of three months during this time. I just didn't feel like I could or I should...so I think ...no in fact I know, that for a while, I have just been on auto-pilot mode. I have been on auto-pilot; not being at my best; hoping that it would be enough to just survive.

So now I feel as if a dark cloud or a fog has been lifted from me. One of the unexpected joys that I had this week, was in preparing and leading the Celebration of Wallace Gant Jr.; a long time member of our church community who passed away. The beautiful flowers on the pedestal to my right are a reflection of his celebration of life! I was inspired by all of the kind words that people shared with me

regarding Wally; you can tell he made quite the impact on all that he came into contact with.

I was especially moved by Wally's caretaker and conservator at the time; Sarah whom I met at Mojave; to plan's Wally's service. She shared that she only was in Wally's life for 8 months; but in hearing her love for God and how much she poured into her own ministry of caring for those who are transitioning; I began to wonder if I was sitting in the presence of a saint or an angel. For I was struck by how much love she poured into the preparation of Wally's service, as if she were his own daughter.

Wally loved to dress and he was always sharp. Sarah went out and bought Wally a beautiful navy blue suit, because she did not have access to his clothes in his home. Wally's immediate family for the most part was estranged; so Sarah without a blink of

an eye, stepped up to be his family. She made sure that Wally had the military come out and honor his life as well.

When they presented the American flag to Sarah, I had to hold back my tears. It reminded me of when the military presented my mom the flag when my dad passed. My immediate thought in witnessing this exchange was, "Of course Sarah should be the one to receive this American flag in honor of Wally's life. Sarah loved Wally...Sarah was Wally's family."

Anyhow I had to make sure that I got a picture with this woman who I hope will come to visit our church...Sarah. I was grateful that Larry Williams took the time to take this picture of us and send it to both Sarah and I so that we could cherish this day.

Sarah played a huge role in helping what was left of the dark cloud to pass over me; her Christian

witness was so electric that it literally burned the last remnants of the layer of fog that was encapsulating my weary soul. To Sarah who didn't even know that she played a role in paving the way for my own renovation; I give thanks to the Great I am for placing her before me.

It feels good to feel good again...

Love KJ.

- Another excerpt from my personal journal for your pleasure or reflection; as we continue on this Holy Renovation sermon series.
- For last week I named that as your spiritual leader, I can sense that a renovation is needed, not only in the life of our community or in the world; but individually as well.
- For the weight of the world is great;
- The news is depressing;

- This dreadful pandemic is ever persisting;
- And sometimes if I am honest; the mission behind the scripture I named last week; Micah 6:8 To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God; this mission seems nearly impossible;
- For the most public cases that has been displayed for the world to see; the Kyle Rittenhouse trial which I am still trying to process and the Ahmaud Arbery trial; has really caused me some major distress even if justice did prevail in particularly the Ahmaud Arbery trial; I am distressed by all of this murder and death and unnecessary blood being shed!
- Not to mention, just day to day life at times; causes me distress;
- For instance the price of meat right now is causing me distress;

- In fact as I revisit my journal entry that I just shared with you; you may note how I was attempting to describe what I have been feeling;
- I described it as a dark cloud, or a fog that seemed to be hovering over me;
- Some in hearing these descriptors might have been thinking to themselves, “Kirstie what you have been describing is anxiety or depression”;
- When I had the privilege of sharing some much needed time earlier this week with Judy Lane and Marty Eischied; two wise women who were also able to minister to my soul and nurture me with food, poetry and wisdom;
- When I shared what I had been feeling with them; some of those same words came up in our conversation; anxiety, fatigue, lack of self care, being too hard on myself....and so on;

- It further affirmed within me that all of these could and most likely were the reasons for my dark cloud.
- However, in looking at our scriptures today and tying in some more tools from the Process Communication Model (PCM) that I introduced last week; I discovered another reason for my dark cloud; that I pray may make space for others who may feel a need for a personal renovation;
- I realized that ultimately what I was describing was **being under distress.**
- You see looking at the PCM training; I would like to give a quick review of it for those tuning in for the very first time.
- The reason why I am introducing this training to the congregation, is because it is training that most pastors in our Great Plains Conference will receive or have already received; with the intention of giving us another tool for self



awareness and self-preparedness; as we lead our congregations.

- So the idea behind PCM is that there are 6 personality/communication models that we all possess; 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;
- Now let me just name that this training is not meant to put anyone in a box; although the moment we are born, we are ironically tasked to

check a box; to define our nationality, ethnicity, gender and more;

- Nevertheless, this tool that I am presenting is not with the intention of putting anyone in a box;
- It is on the contrary another tool such as Myers Brigg, or the enneagram; tools that are designed to raise our emotional intelligence and to get us to think about who we are and our impact with those we interact with.
- **So getting back to the PCM model, I need to also name again; that we all possess each of these communication abilities;**
- However through testing, the results from each individual's response are displayed like the floors of a condominium, with our core or "base" type at the bottom, moving up through each floor to the least-accessed trait at the top, attic.
- So the rationale is that the base is the easiest and most accessible and thus most highly developed

personality type in us; which has the strongest influence on our behavior.

- So I know I shared a lot, and on Wednesday I hope to share more at 6:30pm for the Advent class that I am starting called “Renovate,”
- But what I would like to share with you today in these 6 personality traits; is what distress looks like in each of these communication models.
- Why?
- Well the rationale is once we can identify what it means to be emotionally healthy and what it looks like when we are in distress; this is one way of how we get to a place of renovation within ourselves; which will then help renovation to occur in our relationships, families, communities, churches and more.
- For I guess what I am naming is that I don’t think we always know when we are emotionally unwell or unhealthy.

- I don't think many of us really take the time to notice when we are in distress and the impact of our unaddressed distress on the people and systems around us.
- Sort of like when my daughters were babies, there were times when they would cry, and I would try to console them;
- I would feed them, change them, try putting their binky/pacifier in their mouths and they were still inconsolable....
- And it wasn't until I would just pick them up and hold them close to me up against my skin, that their cries would turned into whimpers that turned into content;
- Because lo and behold my babies were just in distress;
- The kind of distress that could only be cured by a simple hug from their momma;

- Sometimes we just need someone to give us the time and the space to be cared for; to be able to lay our weary heads down in our times of distress;
- But I am convinced that the first step to how you and I get out of distress is by knowing what distress looks like so that we can address it within ourselves.
- **For you see how in my own journal entry, how difficult it was for me to describe what that dark cloud was over me..... and I had the training that I am introducing to you!**
- My “aha” moment of awareness is that if I too had trouble recalling the extensive training I received on the impact of being distressed and what it can do; I wonder if anyone else may be struggling with defining what distress looks like in their own lives and communities as well.
- Looking at our scripture in the Psalm this morning; I would suspect that David who I named to be a harmonizer was in distress as well.

- For last week I named that I am a harmonizer and I shared what a healthy harmonizer looks like;
- For healthy harmonizers tend to love color and have open communication that includes smiles and open hand gestures;
- Healthy harmonizers tend to feel good about their skills and contributions and when they are most healthiest, they do not need words of affirmation from others to inform them of this.
- However when harmonizers are experiencing distress; we tend to over-adapt, make mistakes and attract criticism;
- In fact when a harmonizer is in complete distress....they are usually in what can feel like a helpless state of victimization; where they feel like they can never do anything right; where shame begins to consume them; causing them to emotionally be defeated.

- **So looking at our psalm this morning; I would suggest that we are witnessing a harmonizer in distress.**
- An analysis of this prayer reveals: (1) a deepening sense of responsibility, (2) a feeling of personal inadequacy, (3) terrible forebodings, (4) a growing consciousness of the awfulness of sin, and (5) faith in the mercy and power of God.
- Also, if you and I were to take note of David's words of distress in the first 3 verses where he said:

**1**

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

**2**

O my God, in you I trust;

do not let me be put to shame;

do not let my enemies exult over me.

**3**

Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;  
let them be ashamed who are wantonly  
treacherous; the word choice of “shame,” and  
“ashamed,” are all indicators that David was in  
distress.

- **Going a little further through our condominium:**
- **For a thinker when they are emotionally healthy**, they tend to value doing work that will get recognition, they value time structures, data and measurable tools that indicate progress, growth, success and so forth;
- When a thinker is in distress, they tend to over qualify, they do not delegate and they over control.
- **For a persister, when they are emotionally healthy**; they tend to bring values and beliefs to an organization/entity that instills tradition, morality, justice and more;
- **When a persister is in distress**, they tend to focus on what is wrong and push their own



personal beliefs as the main agenda; without listening or allowing other people's beliefs or ideas to be heard or recognized.

- **For the imaginers when they are emotionally healthy**, solitude is what they crave and they tend to spend a lot of time in this solitude reflecting, imagining, dreaming and pondering;
- **When an imaginer is in distress**, they tend to withdraw or passively wait.
- **For the rebels when they are emotionally healthy**, they are playful; playful in contact; playful with their words and energy;
- **When the rebel is in distress**, they tend to invite others to do or think for them and they tend to blame others when things are not going well.
- **Finally when the promoter is emotionally healthy**, they are charming and helpful with their very creative ideas and action plans;

- **When the promoter is in distress;** they tend to expect others to fend for themselves; they manipulate and break the rules.
- Friends and family, this is why I am inviting us to explore this model, because I don't know about you, but I often have not considered the impact of my own distress and how it can play out on those whom I love around me.
- **Furthermore I am fascinated once again with how our scriptures this morning speaks to this topic of distress.**
- In our psalm with David, we are witnessing a harmonizer name his distress and wisely turn to God to help pave his way out of distress.
- In our psalm David said in his prayer in verse 4-5;  
*Make me to know your ways, O Lord;  
teach me your paths.*

*Lead me in your truth, and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all day long.*

- Looking at our gospel for our lectionary readings it started off by saying in Luke 21; starting at verse 25 saying;

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.

**26** People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **27** Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. **28** Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

- But then towards the end I am getting preaching inspiration as we enter into the path towards renovation where it says;

“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, **35** like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. **36** Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

- For this part of the gospel is inviting us to be ready for Christ return, which is what this first Sunday of Advent is naming for us;
- That as we light our first candle of hope; to be able to clear out our hearts and minds so that we can be aware that there is still hope;

- **To be able to claim that there is still hope** in the midst of this racial tension and divide we are in as a collective world;
- **To be able to claim hope** in a world that has become polarized on every issue imaginable;
- **However, I stopped by to suggest that you and I will not be able to claim this hope;** if we are not able to recognize the things that are blocking our hope;
- **You and I will not be able to envision this hope;** if we are not able to see and name the things that are blunting the full potential of this hope from blooming in its full potential.
- So the main purpose of this sermon is to invite us all to **be on guard church family and friends;** with the ways that distress may be surfacing in our day to day lives;

- Take this time to examine it, process it, reflect on it so that it can be eradicated once and for all; for I suspect that the areas of unaddressed distress is what is at the core of why this world is so polarized in the first place!
- For we have been given another great tool of insight; that teaches us how to get out of the valley of the shadow of death;
- **That teaches us how** to put on our full armor of God;
- **That teaches us how to** truly embrace and love ourselves just as God loves us;
- **As we reclaim** who and whose we are together;
- **As we reclaim** the path towards complete renovation together;

- Let the Church say Amen and Hallelujah..the Best is Truly Yet to Come!

- Happy Thanksgiving!

\*\*\*\*\*Make sure if you feel so lead to write your prayer request, aha moment from today's sermon/ worship service and thoughts in our community journal between or after services or through the week!\*\*\*\*\*