

Sunday January 30, 2022
First Lesson: Jeremiah 1: 4-10
Gospel Lesson: Luke 4: 21-30
Sermon Series: Leadership Effect
Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

We are concluding our last week of the sermon series “Leadership Effect.”

- The goal of this sermon series is to rely on the scriptural lessons to inform us three key concepts that make effective leaders; both within the local Church and beyond.
- The first week, the scriptures revealed to us that **#1; Effective leaders do not just do, they empower others to do.**
- The second week, the scriptures revealed to us that **#2: Effective leaders bring people together for the common good.**
- This week, the theme that I am seeing is the leadership concept that I would like to take some time exploring and that is this idea that; **#3: Effective leaders eat last.**

- So the caveat that I bring to this sermon today is that when I am talking about this idea that leaders eat last, this is not to be taken literally; although as a leader, when I do serve people actual meals within my home, church or other venues, I tend to make sure that every one eats first before I eat;
- For this is not just good leadership etiquette; this is just good hostess etiquette Amen!
- However, where I got this last leadership component from, is from a book that I have begun reading by Simon Sinek ; “Leaders Eat Last,”
- And why I was struck by this particular book is because firstly, the author Simon Sinek would call himself an optimist who believes in a brighter future for humanity;
- And so as a teacher and preacher of the Bible, I resonate with this wholeheartedly.
- For the essence of my vocation; **the heart of my vocation** and others who are called to preach and

teach the Bible, is to share the good news to a broken world;

- **We are called** to teach and preach the good news both in season and out of season; what Jesus started off last week in our Gospel of Luke that we will be continuing to read today; this idea that “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor;”
- So this is the vocational task that is before any presenter of the scriptural texts; to preach a consistent message of God’s unapologetic and unconditional love for all of humanity; to present a theology that proclaims that there is indeed hope; **there is in fact always hope**, even if the world appears to be in a hopeless state; to empower the

people that just as the problem is in their midst, so is indeed the solution; to encourage people to keep striving towards the light that presents a better way forward for us all by way of our God given spiritual traits that becomes evident once we choose to invest our time, talents, gifts service and witness for the transformation of the world.

- Secondly, in this book, the author in many ways describes what he means by leaders eat last, in the prologue portion of his book where he says;

Leaders are the ones who run headfirst into the unknown.

They rush toward the danger.

They put their own interests aside to protect us or to pull us into the future.

Leaders would sooner sacrifice what is theirs to save what is ours.

And they would never sacrifice what is ours to save what is theirs.

This is what it means to be a leader.

*It means they choose to go first into danger,
headfirst toward the unknown.*

*And when we feel sure they will keep us safe,
we will march behind them*

*and work tirelessly to see their visions come to
life*

and proudly call ourselves their followers.

- So what I take away from this powerful statement is the same idea that Jesus reinforced to potential followers of him in Luke 9 starting at verse 57; where it says As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” **58** And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”
- This idea that when you are a leader it is rarely a comfortable role to have;

- For being a leader is not about gaining popularity or notoriety for that matter; at least in the way some of us might hope;
- For as we jump fully into the gospel this morning even more; we see this dynamic that I am implicitly naming, play out right before our very eyes;
- For now we are continuing our story with Jesus in the gospel of Luke, after Jesus sat down and proclaimed that this was the year of God's favor (v.20) and that today this anticipated prophecy was being fulfilled in their hearing (v. 21).
- So **the first response** we see in this declaration is the whole group reacts as one. The Word tells us that *All* who witnessed this message responded in the same way, with wonder — with admiration or amazement.
- Not to mention that this would be the proper response to the good news of God's at work in the world through Jesus.... is wonder and amazement.

- For I can hear the synagogue buzzing with the voices of those saying, “Wow, what amazing news. Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”
- Not to mention it is also important to note that the synagogue audience is right, this is Joseph’s son; however, the reader knows what the audience in the synagogue does not.
- The reader of Luke knows that this is the one true son, the Son of God (Luke 3:38), and not simply the biological son of Joseph.
- But then lo and behold conflict begins to arise in our gospel;
- First off , the crowd wants Jesus to do the same miracles in Nazareth that he did in Capernaum.
- A study of these two communities reveals that there may have been some rivalry between the towns, where most likely the people of Nazareth felt that the hometown son should show them

special favor and consideration, especially if he is the messenger and fulfillment of such good news.

- Jesus continues his proclamation with a second saying, “No prophet is acceptable in his home country” (v. 24). This is the first time in Luke, Jesus is identified as a prophet, but this will bring rejection rather than acceptance in the place where he is well known.
- This scrutiny does not stop Jesus however, from continuing to proclaim his mission;
- So Jesus continues his proclamation by alluding to two famous prophets: Elijah and Elisha.
- Of all the stories about these two famous prophets, Jesus picks two about prophetic ministry to people **who were not** part of the people of Israel — Jesus was talking about ministry done on behalf of those **who were not** part of the hometown crowd.

- The implication in this is that Jesus too has a ministry that is directed at those beyond the borders of his hometown.
- Once again, Luke is reminding his readers that Jesus' salvific ministry is available to all;
- In Luke's gospel there is an emphasis on salvation for both the Jew and the Gentile (e.g., Luke 2:31-32; 3:6).
- And so here in Jesus' initial proclamation of good news, he makes it clear that he will not be a prophet who serves the special interests of his hometown, but rather a messenger of good news for the whole world and especially the vulnerable.
- **Leading to a second response** from the people where just as in the first response, *all* of them have the same reaction.
- But instead this time, the hometown crowd **is full of anger.**

- They heard Jesus proclaim good news; they want proof (in the form of signs) that Jesus is the prophet he claims to be; and they hear, with anger, his declaration that his ministry is directed to **all**.
- So, the people respond with anger, and as a group they rise up and try to kill him (v. 29).
- So in summary, Jesus' ministry begins with the proclamation of good news; but then the wind shifts; Jesus' proclamation is ultimately rejected; and the crowd attempts to kill him.
- And so as I step out of our gospel to make some connections for us today, I'll reiterate it again....Good leaders...effective leaders....eat last.
- Good leaders eat last because they recognize that leadership is not about having power, but it is about living out your authentic purpose to Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,

In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

- Good leaders eat last because sometimes they are treated as outcasts themselves, but this does not stop them from fulfilling their calling.
- Good leaders eat last because sometimes, often times they are called to move against the grain; they are called to rise in the midst of universal consensus at times when the consensus of the people have lost it's way;
- Good leaders eat last because sometimes their charge is simply ahead of their time, although the charge is desperately needed for such a time as this;
- Good leaders eat last because sometimes it can be oh so lonely waiting for others to be ready and

willing to join such a daunting charge; although it is evident that such a charge is needed to be attempted at some point;

- For the captives are still imprisoned...
- The oppressed are still in bondage...
- And the good news has not reached the poor just yet....
- Leaving the good leaders eating last;
- For if not you... then who?
- If not now... then when?
- I think of leaders such as the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; I am certain he had no idea that his birthday would be a national holiday celebrated every year by the entire world;
- For on the contrary, when he was planting seeds of a beloved community where his children and all other children could eat at the table together and know that they belong there together; this message

if inclusion was rejected by many so much so that he was assassinated;

- In fact good leaders...effective leaders such as Abraham Lincoln (who was regarded as one of the best presidents in American history, who was determined to hold together a nation that was falling apart at the seams), Frederick Douglass (an escaped slave who became a prominent activist, author and public speaker), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (German Protestant theologian important for his support of ecumenism and his view of Christianity's role in a secular world), Ruth Bader Ginsburg (whose commitment to the principle of equal justice under the law transformed the legal landscape in the U.S. — particularly for women) and the list goes on and on; I'm thinking of all of the nurses, doctors and health workers who are fighting this pandemic for the rest of us; leaders such as these and more knew what it meant to

forge through crisis; they understood the concept that good leaders...effective leaders **eat last**.

- For these leaders both past and present, forged through crises; racial crises, pandemic and health care crises, war crises, economic crises and more;
- And for what some may ask?
- And my response as I look at our first lesson of Jeremiah that tells us that 'before we were formed in our mother's wombs God knew us and before we were born we were consecrated',
- I would suggest the why, is that for leaders who are truly called, **we can't help it**;
- For natural born leaders like Jeremiah and many others typically hears the inner voice that calls them by name; effective leaders hears that prevenient grace that beckons them to move forward with everything they have, **where I'll reiterate it again...they simply can't help it**;

- **They can't help but respond** to the call that would invite them to seek solutions and invest their skills to help transform the systems and people that surround them;
- **They can't help but** bring their wisdom and insight and foresight to respond to the greater needs of the community;
- **They can't help** but shine their light in only the ways that they were formed to do so for such a time as this;
- **They can't help but** contribute to the body of Christ;
- For as I reimagine the words of 1Corinthians 12: 12-27 with a new sense of understanding as it pertains to leadership:
- “There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body. It is the same with Christ. **13** We were all baptized by one Holy Spirit. And so we are formed into one body. It didn't

matter whether we were Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free people. We were all given the same Spirit to drink. **14** So the body is not made up of just one part. It has many parts.”

- So this means that the foot **can't help but help out** the hand;
- The eye **can't help but help out** the body;
- **The ear can't help but help** out the nose;
- **25** In that way, the parts of the body will not take sides. All of them will take care of one another because **we simply cannot help but do so**;
- For all of us were appointed in some aspect of leadership;
- As Ephesians 4 tells us starting at verse 7;
- But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. **8** Therefore it is said, “When he (Jesus) ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive;
he gave gifts to his people.”

- **11** And the gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13** until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. **14** We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. **15** But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.
- So this Church is the impact of effective leadership; this is the leadership effect that I leave with us all;

- And my personal mission as your spiritual leader is to not sit down completely until a fire is lit up within each and everyone of us;
- A fire that is ablaze but it cannot be consumed;
- Like the burning bush of God that Moses approached that one day as he was about to embark on his own God given leadership mission;
- The main leadership effect that I am hoping to name; if you don't get anything else out of this sermon series; is that there is this fire within all of us ready to be unleashed not erratically because the God within us has it under control;
- However, I need to explicitly name that the fire is there and the world needs to see it;
- The fire is there, and the world is relying on it;
- For we are all on holy ground; letting us know that all of our efforts for peace, love, mercy and justice will not return void;

- On the contrary our efforts by God's grace will grow; causing the kin-dom to grow on earth as is in heaven.... This is the true transformation that awaits us all!
- 1- Effective leaders don't just do...they empower others to do;
- 2-Effective leaders bring people together for the common good;
- 3-Effective leaders eat last
- Making it clearer how 5,000 + people can have baskets full of food leftover from only 5 fish and 2 loaves;
- Making it clearer how water can transform into wine;
- Making it more evident that the best is truly yet to come...
- Thanks be to God...Hallelujah and Amen!
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