

**First Lesson: Nehemiah 8: 1-3, 5-6, 8-10**

**Gospel Lesson: Luke 4: 14-21**

**Sermon Series: Leadership Effect**

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- We are continuing in our journey on the three-week sermon series entitled the “**Leadership Effect.**”
- As I stated last week; over these next three weeks, I will be relying on our lectionary readings to provide three key components, that will hopefully help us all to become more effective in our leadership, both within the Church and beyond.
- So last week, the first leadership component that we learned from the scriptures is that effective leaders **do not just do, they empower others to do.**
- This week in looking at both our first lesson of Nehemiah and our Gospel of Luke; the second

component that I would like to immediately reveal that I see emerging from these passages of scripture is this concept that; **Good leaders bring people together for the common good.**

- And so before unpacking both of our lessons this morning so that hopefully you all might begin to experience this second leadership component as being true for yourself, I would like us to think on this theological question;
- What made Jesus miracles a true miracle?
- **From Jesus first** documented miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana that we talked about last week;
- **To us peeking** at the [Gospel of John](#), where Jesus is said to have performed [seven miraculous signs](#) that characterized his ministry, from [changing water into wine](#) at the start of his ministry to [raising Lazarus from the dead](#) at the end.

- **From us looking** at the healings of Jesus where ailments were cured, **to exorcisms** where demons were cast away;
- **From Jesus feeding 5000 men** and their families with 5 loaves and 2 fish;
- **And then Mark letting us know** that he saw Jesus do it again, with 4000 people off of just 7 loaves of bread;
- I ask again, what made these miracles true miracles in your mind?
- For as I look at how my own faith journey has evolved over these past 20 years or so, the High Christology that I possessed would have instantly suggested that the miracle in these stories, were that **the people** were able to be delivered;
- **The people were able to be delivered** in all of their ailments and diseases;

- **The people were able to be delivered** from starving, because there were baskets of food left over;
- The miracle as I saw it back then, was that Jesus was God, and like the amazing magical God Jesus was (cause remember I was only 20 something trying to figure all of this theological stuff out for myself); Jesus was able to take his metaphorical/spiritual wand and literally say **poof begone** and so it was;
- **Poof begone** to blindness;
- **Poof begone** to hunger;
- **Poof begone** to any brood of vipers, creepy crawly creatures or Satanic influences and so forth;
- Church family, my embedded faith and understanding taught me that this was the miracle;

- That our God is such an awesome God, that **if you and I** believe enough;
- **If you and I** can just trust enough;
- That **if you and I could** just have faith the size of a mustard seed **enough**; we could say to the metaphorical mountains that arise in our life journeys; “Poof...be gone...**and they will be gone.**”
- But then over time, if I can be candid with you; I noticed that as I lived a little longer and worked a little longer in this vocation that I am still ever so passionate about; that it wasn’t that simple;
- I learned that although Jesus is still God in my mind; that is the good news;
- That even Jesus himself never really subscribed to a “**poof and begone**” ministry or a “poof and begone” theology for that matter;
- On the contrary **what you and I have been** witnessing in these ancient texts I am now

convinced now more than ever; **is a really effective leader;**

- **What you and I have been** witnessing I am convinced, is God as Jesus, becoming the best model for us as humans; to show us how effective leadership can really be; **if it is steeped** in principles of unconditional love, mercy, grace, forgiveness and more;
- For **leadership of this type** that I am describing, is what turns water into wine;
- **Leadership of this type** is what literally will move mountains;
- For Jesus shows us in his leadership style, that although he perhaps could have relied on his own spiritual expertise alone; to transform the world;
- You and I innately know that this is not the desire for God's heart in doing this;

- For I suppose that what I am naming, is that God is a relational God, who created us all to live in Communion with God;
- **God created us all** in God's image and gave us all free will to decide if we would abide in this truth;
- Jesus who was fully human and fully divine decided; as I jump into our gospel fully this morning; to live amongst us with one specific goal;
- To dwell amongst the people and bring the people together; to offer a way forward for them; to offer some good news; that the original creation of God Almighty is still possible!
- You see, as I put our gospel into my own words; Jesus, filled with the power of the Triune Spirit, returned to Galilee; and a report about him spread through the surrounding country and Jesus said;

*“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,*

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*to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

- Now I want you all to take note, that Jesus does not inform the people **how the captives** would be set free **or how the blind** would be able to see **or how the oppressed** would go free;
- Nevertheless preceding this declaration the Gospel tells us in verse 20 *And he (Jesus) rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”*



- So as a reader and active participant of this text, I found myself wondering why did Jesus suggest that the prophecy was fulfilled, when all he did was give a speech; as compelling as it was....it was indeed essentially a sermon....so my temptation in this is to say to Jesus, **“hold up Jesus, you’re not done yet?”**
- **Where is the strategic plan Jesus for how we might go about this huh?**
- **What exactly is the good news for the poor?**
- **How exactly are the captives going to be set free?**
- **How is the blind going to be able to suddenly see?**
- **When will the oppressed be set free?**
- But then I started to think about leaders such as Dr. King, whom I hope y’all don’t mind me sharing more on him beyond his recognized birthday;

- But Dr. King also had a compelling vision on how he would achieve this Beloved Community he talked so much about.
- For the very thing that threatened this vision of community for Dr. King equated to three key areas;
- The Triple Evils of POVERTY, RACISM and MILITARISM were in Dr. King's eyes, forms of violence that existed in a vicious cycle.
- For King they were interrelated, all-inclusive, and stood as barriers to our living in the Beloved Community.
- So in Dr. King's compelling talks with the people, his conversations embodied principles that said, when we work to remedy one evil, we affect all evils.
- So for Dr. King, to work against the Triple Evils, he developed a nonviolent frame of mind as described in the "Six Principles of Nonviolence"

and used the Kingian model for social action outlined in the “Six Steps for Nonviolent Social Change.”

- Where PRINCIPLE ONE states that Nonviolence Is a Way of Life for Courageous People.
- Where non violence is not a method for cowards; on the contrary the act of non-violence itself does resist evil.
- The practice of non-violence in itself is aggressive spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.
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- PRINCIPLE TWO states that : Nonviolence Seeks to Win Friendship and Understanding;
- Where the outcome of nonviolence is the creation of the Beloved Community.
- The end result of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation;
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- PRINCIPLE THREE states that Nonviolence Seeks to Defeat Injustice, or Evil, Not People.
- Nonviolence recognizes that evildoers are also victims and are not evil people.
- Therefore, the nonviolent resister seeks to defeat evil; not persons victimized by evil.
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- PRINCIPLE FOUR states that:  
Nonviolence holds that unearned, voluntary suffering for a just cause; **can educate** and transform people and societies.
- Nonviolence is a willingness to accept suffering without retaliation; to accept blows without striking back.
- Nonviolence is a willingness to accept violence if necessary **but never inflict it.**

- Nonviolence holds that unearned suffering for a cause **is redemptive** and has tremendous educational and transforming possibilities.
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- PRINCIPLE FIVE states that Nonviolence Chooses Love Instead of Hate.
- Nonviolence resists violence of the spirit as well as the body.
- Nonviolent love is spontaneous, unselfish, and creative.
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- PRINCIPLE SIX states that Nonviolence Believes That the Universe Is on the Side of Justice.
- The nonviolent resister has deep faith that justice will eventually win;
- Where nonviolence believes that God is a God of justice.

- **So again, this was all really compelling stuff that Dr. King studied and brought forth before the people;**
- Just as compelling as Jesus speech to the people back then; of painting a similar beloved community of good news being brought to the poor, the captives being released from captivity, the blind being able to see and the oppressed being set free.
- And **like Jesus**, I can see Dr. King too rolling up the scroll, giving it back to his attendant and sitting down after he was done.
- **Like Jesus**, I suppose one could say that Dr. King fulfilled his mission as well.
- Thereby leaving us all with two compelling speeches with no real directives or outcomes; yet both leaders have decided to take their seats.

- In these two models, here we have Church, **two powerful leadership lessons** that inform us that the true miracle that is more powerful than Lazarus being raised from the dead himself was that in both instances **the people were there;**
- In other words, both Jesus and Dr. King did fulfill their mission;
- They worked tirelessly on the battlefield to spread this vision of what the community could be;
- **Now it is up** to the community to work on completing this mission.
- **Now it is up** for the community to work together to figure out how to keep the community intact;
- **Now it is up** to the community to work together to help the community to thrive;
- As I bring our first lesson of Nehemiah into a more direct focus; a lesson that shows us the

impact of what happens when a community comes together for the common good;

- Church, this community in our first lesson came together; at the beginning of the seventh month, everyone gathered at the Water Gate in Jerusalem.
- Ezra brings the Law of Moses and reads it to all the people.
- The first lesson tells us that he began reading this law at sunrise morning and finished at midday.
- And what was so impressive about this community, is that every one stayed during the reading and they were attentive;
- They were committed;
- Everyone essentially turned off their phones and listened;
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- In this lesson, Nehemiah listed the people who stood on the platform next to Ezra as he read, and also the names of those Levites who helped explain the law so people could understand it.
- Nehemiah also explained the form of this assembly, with the people standing up as Ezra opens the scroll and starts to read, and concluding with an "Amen, Amen."
- The people wept with guilt when they heard the law being read, since they've been so disobedient.
- But Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites who were teaching the people, told them to rejoice rather than mourn.
- For the leaders of this time proclaimed This day as holy to the Lord, a day that they should eat and drink with joy.

- So again these leaders in our first lesson; they fulfilled their leadership role;
- They brought the people together;
- Dr. King, fulfilled his leadership role...he brought the people together;
- Jesus fulfilled his leadership role....he brought the people together for the common good;
- My aha moment was that this was tremendous in itself...for it is tough to bring people together in their time, talents, gifts, service and witness, and yet they did;
- Leaving then the people who came together, with an important decision to consider;
- **Will they do their part** in bringing good news to the poor?
- **Will they do their part** in helping to release the captives?
- **Will they do their part** in helping to recover the sight of the blind?

- **Will they do their part** in helping the oppressed go free?
- For **this is the year** of the Lord's Favor;
- **This is the year** where the community can be reclaimed;
- **This is the year** where the community can be restored;
- Oh Lord, let this message that has been preached on this day of January, 23, 2022 be fulfilled in the people's hearing...
- Amen and Hallelujah!