

Sunday February 20, 2022
First Lesson: Genesis 45: 3-11, 15
Gospel Lesson: Luke 6: 27-38
Sermon Series: Ripple Effect
Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

We are beginning a two-week sermon series on the topic “Ripple Effect.”

- The goal of this series is to be able to name the ultimate impact that happens when you and I begin to put into practice what it means to be a leader and a volunteer within the Church and our community;
- The effect that I am naming happens as a result, is what I would call the “ripple effect;”
- Mother Theresa said it best when she said, *I alone cannot change the world, but **I can cast a stone across the water to create many ripples.***
- You see for both Mother Theresa and the peace activist Thich Nach Hahn who I named last

week; who also said; *Because you are alive, everything is possible;*”

- Essentially church, both of these individuals were naming the same thing;
- And that is this idea that when our efforts are steeped and grounded in positivity and love, this is indeed how progress is made;
- **It becomes like a ripple;**
- Where just as if one were skipping stones; the pleasure in this activity is being able to create a wave of ripples; that graduates in size within each layer and that becomes never-ending;
- The ethos of Mother Theresa was to encourage people to make a ripple; in the way that they lived their lives.
- And so this is why I am particularly drawn to Mother Theresa, is because when I began my Masters of Divinity journey at Phillips Theological

Seminary in Tulsa; I was particularly struck with how much of a missional heart of service that she had;

- I was also particularly drawn to her personal belief in this ripple effect that I am naming; this belief that one person can indeed make a difference in the world;
- And yes this concept in itself may not seem very new or original to some;
- For there are small documented events of the “pay it forward” notion throughout history;
- Where although, it became a widely popular concept after the 2000 movie of the same name, which was **based on the novel by Catherine Ryan Hyde...Pay it Forward**;
- This idea that when someone does something for you, instead of paying that person back

directly, you pass it on to another person instead and so on and so on;

- I would suggest that with Mother Theresa's ethos; what she was naming was much more significant than even this;
- For Mother Theresa was not just talking about how to put our good works into action... no, no on the contrary Mother Theresa was sharing with the world **how to put our faith into action!**
- For she was not just naming that if someone buys you a bag of groceries, then you should go out and buy some groceries for someone else; although a very generous thing to do no doubt, but I think we would be missing the potential magnitude of this ripple effect; **if we stop right there;**

- So again, Mother Theresa is naming something much more substantial in my eyes, than simply repeating a good deed or returning a favor;
- For the ripples that Mother Theresa believed that one human alone by God's grace and power could create, were colossal!
- Perhaps giving new meaning to scriptures such as Matthew 17: 20: "if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, **'Move from here to there,'** and it will move."
- For Mother Theresa, she spent her life on making that scripture become her living and active reality;
- Mother Theresa was attempting to move mountains;
- **For she moved mountains** for the sick and the poorest of the poor;

- **She moved mountains** by establishing the *Missionaries of Charity*, a Roman Catholic religious congregation; that began as a small community with 12 members in *Kolkata, India*. It then began to attract recruits and donations; and by the 1960s it had opened *hospices, orphanages and leper houses throughout India*.
- **Mother Theresa moved mountains**, by taking in homeless children and providing them with *food, shelter and medical care*.
- Mother Theresa moved mountains at the age of 12; determined to create ripples wherever her feet led her;
- And it was not because she thought these actions would lead to the dozens of awards that she would be granted; one of them including the *Nobel Peace Prize* awarded to her in 1979;

- No, Mother Theresa **moved mountains**, simply because she allowed the Imago Dei; her full awareness that she was created in the image of God; to envelop her, to radiate her, to equip her; to inform her; so that her spiritual gifts might be unleashed for the transformation of the world.
- Mother Theresa I would imagine, took the time to respond to the prevenient Grace that was upon her in her mother's womb; that grace that ushers and moves all of us into our unique and specific purpose; so that our contributions might be poured out fully into the world;
- Thereby fulfilling humanity's initial charge from God in the beginning; at the Genesis of it all in Chapter 1: 28; that said to humanity; "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it;"

- A scripture that I once only saw as a mere instruction; that might encourage procreation for population purposes alone;
- But now understand this to be a charge; that invites a different type of procreation to come forth in this reproductive act;
- I'm talking about a birth that might produce the fruits of the Spirit within all of us; to be unleashed unto the world;
- So that thy kin-dom come, thy will be done; on Earth as is in heaven; might be fully achieved and realized;
- Where in this kin-dom; the harvest is plenty and the workers are plentiful;
- Where Matthew 6: 25-26 becomes our living reality;

- Where we are not worried about our lives, what we will eat or what we will drink, or about our bodies, or what we will wear.
- For our faith tells us that life is indeed more than food, and the body more than clothing;
- For our eyes can see and affirm that the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet our heavenly Father feeds them.
- Which gives us assurance that we indeed are more valuable than them;
- An assurance that I am convinced that if God had it God's way, we would put our whole trust in this assurance; so that we might be freed up from these daily concerns that always seem to have a way of being taken care of;
- Yet I know the reason why many of us myself included ; have not been able to create our greatest ripple yet;

- Is because we still can't seem to trust that just as the Lillies are being clothed; we too are being clothed;
- For **we are being clothed** daily by God's grace;
- **We are being clothed daily** by God's mercy;
- **We are being clothed daily** in God's love;
- Which on one hand we intuitively now should be more than enough;
- But on the other hand, perhaps we are not so sure;
- Leaving the main difference between Mother Theresa and many of us; is that she aligned her life, her efforts, her actions; so that she could be sure that her life was purpose filled and purpose driven;
- To create one of the greatest ripples that this Earth would ever know;

- Mother Theresa lived her life with as much effort as I would try and skip actual stones from time to time on a lake or a pond...but no matter how smooth or flat the stone I would find; I never quite created the ripple that I wanted to...
- But that didn't keep me from trying to keep skipping these stones, until I could make the ripple that gave me the satisfaction; that let me know that I conquered the pond—if only for a moment;
- This is how Mother Theresa invited us all to live our actual lives;
- For the fuller quote where this ripple effect came from said this;

There are many people who can do big things, but there are very few people who will do the small things'

'If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one'

'each one of those I serve is Jesus in disguise'.

'this is how we are to love each other, by giving ourselves to each other.'

'Jesus wants us to give of ourselves every moment'.

'I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.'

'I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.'

- **So taking all of this in; questions that I would raise then for our further consideration are, “What would the world look like if you and I focused on creating ripples with every moment we are blessed to kiss the Earth with our feet?”**
- What would our families look like if we focused our energy on creating ripples like these?
- What would our communities look like, if you and I gave of ourselves with this measure of intentionality?
- And so where our First Lesson and Gospel fits into this conversation is that we see examples of how to create these ripples in our day to day life;
- For in addressing our gospel of Luke 6 first for our discussion;
- This is a gospel that I would name in context with our sermon series, that **is teaching us how to create a ripple;**

- So I will paraphrase this gospel so that you may hear it in a new way;
- But it is saying in my eyes; **if you wish to create a ripple**; *love your enemies, do good to those who hate you*; **thereby creating a ripple** that might push out the hate;
- **If you wish to create a ripple**, then if anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; **thereby creating a ripple** that might de-escalate the violence;
- Christ is saying **if you wish to create a ripple**, then if anyone were to take your coat, do not withhold even your shirt; **thereby creating a ripple** that might eradicate poverty;
- **If you wish to create a ripple**, (I'm jumping down to verse 37, because I think you are getting what I am trying to say by now); **do not judge**, and you will not be judged; **do not**

condemn, and you will not be condemned;
forgive, and **you** will be forgiven; **give**, and **it**
will be given to you; **A good measure, pressed**
down, shaken together, running over, will be
put into your lap, for the measure you give will be
the measure you give back!”

- And where our first lesson of Genesis 45 comes in my eyes; is that we are seeing an example of what it looks like in action; when a person decides to create a ripple;
- Joseph, who was of Jacob’s 12 sons, was betrayed by his brothers;
- Why?
- Scriptures tell us that his father loved him more than any of the others and gave him a colored cloak.

- Therefore, his brothers were jealous of him and took sibling rivalry to a whole other level and sold him into slavery.
- Where Joseph was taken to Egypt and eventually became steward to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials.
- And Potiphar's wife tried unsuccessfully to seduce him and after false accusations were brought up about Joseph— he was imprisoned.
- But due to his ability to interpret Pharaoh's dream, Joseph was made governor of Egypt.
- And Joseph wisely rationed the country's produce in preparation for a time of famine.
- And here is where things get interesting, for during the famine, Jacob's sons came to Egypt to plead with Joseph for supplies;
- Bringing a whole new meaning to the saying;
“what goes around, comes around;”

- So Joseph had an important decision to make;
- Would he help his brothers or not?
- For the way they mistreated him, most wouldn't probably have blamed Joseph for turning his back on them;
- But Joseph instead **decided to create a ripple**;
- He chose to skip a stone that I would symbolically name to be forgiveness their way;
- And the ripple effect began with Joseph inviting his father and brothers to come and settle in Egypt;
- From **this one act of forgiveness** yielded a ripple that aided Joseph in **preserving life**—the life of the Egyptians and of other neighboring nations,
- From **this one act of forgiveness**, Joseph created another ripple that would preserve God's people;

- **From this one act of forgiveness;** Joseph created another ripple that would provide leadership, for God had made Joseph **a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt.**
- **From this one act of forgiveness** Church family; Joseph created a ripple that reaches to even where we are today; for Joseph is often seen as an Old Testament equivalent, or prefiguration, of Christ;
- Not to mention thousands of years later, every time a pastor, teacher, preacher or person recalls the story of Joseph;
- New seeds are being planted within us all;
- For just as John 1 reminds us; that God's Word **is an active and living Word;**

- *Where in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.*
- The prayer is that **this Word** comes to life in our hearts today;
- **The prayer is** like in the story of Matthew 13: starting at verse 4;
- That this Word becomes like a seed **that does not fall along the path**, and the birds come and eat it up; or fall on rocky places, where it does not have much soil; only to spring up quickly, because the soil is shallow; or when the sun comes up, the plants become scorched, and they wither because they had no root;

- **But Lord let this seed** become one that falls on **good soil**, where it produces a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown; thereby creating a ripple that might transform this kingdom yet.
- Let the Church say Amen!
-