

Sunday September 18, 2022

First Lesson: 1 Timothy 2: 1-7

Gospel Lesson: Luke 16: 1-13

Sermon Series: Harvest Effect

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

- We are continuing with the sermon series, “The Harvest Effect;” a sermon series that is inviting us all to see the harvest and consider our role in it. So the goal of this sermon today is to really unpack what this harvest really is?
- For this past Wednesday, both Applying the Sermon to Life Classes of adults at 5:15 and youth at 6:45pm has grown, which has made our discussions that much richer!

- Furthermore, from our conversations together, there seemed to be some questions surrounding what the spiritual harvest really is?
- Is the Spiritual harvest a representation of what could be?
- For instance, when I am using the language of harvest, am I up here painting a picture of a world similar to that the Israelites were promised—a land flowing with milk and honey?
- Or is the Spiritual harvest the world that we are living in right now?
- To help us to consider the answer to these questions; sitting down with the Youth Applying the Sermon to Life, I asked them the question of “What is the good, bad and ugly of the world from their perspective?”

- As a side note, from our virtual membership class that we had last week via zoom, what birthed from there is a new online ministry called “Live-ing Together.”
- This will be an online opportunity where ZOOM panelists from our community will come together, engaging some tough questions as it pertains to our spirituality, faith and community;
- Therefore, our first online interactive live topic will be the same question that I posed to our youth, “What is the good, bad and ugly of Church?”
- This conversation will go live on both Facebook and be made available on our website this Monday, September 19 @6pm.
- So getting back to the conversation with the youth, their answer was that **the good thing about life** is getting to go on field trips, Homecoming dances,

having close friends you can relate to and trust, gaining friends through cross country, liking school because you have “finally found your people”; and fourth grade romances.

- **What is good about life** is that everything is booming right now in the life of our congregation. For there is lots of energy and motivation; people always in our building; folks happy on staff to get to come to a place they enjoy working, and not having as many direct concerns of covid keeping us from doing activities with one another.
- **What is bad about life right now** according to our youth community, is that teachers in particular are still catching Covid; the stress of balancing school life, church life and babysitting; one youth shared that everything is going wrong in their life I.e. parent/custody issues; a youth facilitator described

their in-laws as being a stressor; other bad things are friend issues, and friends moving away.

- **What is ugly about life right now** according to our youth community, is pollution; for humanity as a whole is treating the Earth like it is our own private toilet facility; **what is ugly about life** is Covid, Controversy over everything—politics, private vs. public education, the inability to really be able to say anything to any one without there being controversy; war, confusing and corrupt politics and bumbling ole fools screaming at one another.
- So this is a long way of my naming that when we are talking about the spiritual harvest, this is what this harvest is Church Family;
- The harvest is good and can even be better if we are committed to making it better.

- The harvest is bad in that there are a lot of things that just aren't equitable, fair, just and right.
- The harvest is ugly with war, crime, isms and division.
- You see the harvest is a both/and not an either/or in my eyes;
- The harvest is something that in my eyes that could be very beautiful and often has beautiful moments, such as looking out over a field of wheat field, where at harvest time it is that iconic golden color, blowing in the wind.
- On the flip side, the harvest can be as ugly and painful as if you and I were to run in a vast corn field; for if the corn is mature, you and I will be cut up, as we smash through the leaves endlessly.

- Therefore, the harvest represents life; your life and my life all living in this Earth together;
- All bringing in the good, bad and ugly together;
- Therefore as I bring our first lesson into a more direct conversation this morning;
- This would make sense why the assumed writer Paul in our text expression is as such, where he is saying ***I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone,***
- Because we all know that in this harvest that we are all living in together;
- It seems that some of us have been overlooked in this harvest.
- It seems that some if us have been rejected in this harvest.

- It seems that some of have taken some liberties in this harvest that we have no business in taking in this harvest;
- To ensure our own wealth,
- To ensure our own security,
- To ensure our own comfort.
- Which leads me into readdressing another statement that I made in last week's sermon;
- A statement that our Adult Applying the Sermon to Life was interested in hearing more about; where I said in order for us to become great harvesters, we must be willing to be harvested.
- Some of our aspiring harvesters in the class wanted to know what it means to be harvested.

- However, I was struck by the small group table that contained most of our Gen Z's at the table, who did not wrestle with this question as much.
- For their group came up with this idea that if one had to ask the question of whether or not a person has been harvested, then chances are they have not.
- For it seems in the generation of today, that what it means to be loving and inclusive towards one another, tends to not be as complex as some of the prior generations have made it.
- This sentiment reminds me of the new Little Mermaid live film that is coming out in May of 2023.
- For there is a lot of controversy surrounding the fact that the individual who is playing this mythological character, is not the white skinned red hair mermaid that many of us have grown up with.

- Instead, Ariel is played by Hallie Bailey who is African American.
- Unfortunately there is a lot of controversy that has come from this.
- In response, many parents have recorded videos of their black and brown children watching the trailer for the very first time, in which I would like to show you a clip right now.
- I would also have you know that there are other clips of Caucasian children watching this clip, who were just as moved by how pretty this Ariel is.
- I came across one video of a little Caucasian girl who after seeing this, asked for another Giselle as well.
- Where the real ugly has begun to manifest itself in this harvest we all live in is now online, there are

hurtful pictures of an African American Ariel caricature eating watermelon and other racist tropes circulating, that I will not show in worship.

- Either way, I stopped by to declare that in all cases that I have witnessed; the children—White, Black, Brown and more— all of them appreciated this Ariel.
- Thereby showing us all another example, of how racism is unfortunately taught.
- Which therefore invites us to really consider Paul's exhortation with a new level of understanding and consideration;
- *I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, **2** for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.*

- For if the world is debating over the skin color of a mythological character...then the world definitely needs prayer....
- **Furthermore when verse 3 of our text says, *This is right and acceptable before God our Savior, 4 who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.***
- I believe that what we all are invited to be saved from is all that separates us from the essence of God and that which divides us from one another;
- For whether it be racism or sexism or ableism or whatever ism or social phobia that keeps us divided;
- This my friends is what we are called to be harvested from; so that God's provision for us and God's blessing for others can come forth fully in our collective lives.

- For in bringing our gospel more fully into this conversation, I believe the essence of what you and I are witnessing is what we have been naming all along.
- We are witnessing Jesus through this parable, outline what it looks like for one to go through this harvesting process.
- For at the heart of what allows us to be harvested is to be able to have reconciled within us the inevitable conflict between divine love and human legalism.
- You see as we have been studying the gospel of Luke for a while now, we have witnessed the Pharisees in their hard exclusiveness, self-righteousness, and contempt for others.
- In today's gospel we are looking at their self-indulgence being brought to the surface.

- Either way, the takeaway from our gospel that we are called to understand and embrace is that in order for us all to achieve the outcome that Paul is proposing in our first lesson in verse 2; *to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity*;
- Then in order for us all to have this level of dignity, then there is no room for exclusivity,
- There is no room for self-righteousness;
- There is no room for self-indulgence;
- There is definitely no room for contempt for one another;
- For this level of legalism is destroying us;
- It is wrecking us;
- It is wreaking havoc on this harvest;

- And in the year 2022, it is time to go, if we wish for this harvest to thrive and survive..
- For what our gospel is really highlighting to us Church family, is that as a society; as a people; we have become more farsighted and often more earnest in carrying on secular business and legalistic expectations than we are in doing the work of the Kingdom.
- This, of course, is not always true, but sometimes it is, most of the time it is true.
- So the questions I leave us all to wrestle with is this; what happens if we really made room for one another?
- What happens if we really made space in this harvest for one another?

- What happens if we made room for the gospel to reign superior and supreme in our lives above all?
- Perhaps it could look something like this (show the picture of the two mermaids).....and if this is the outcome.....
- Then what is wrong with this?
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