

Sunday, July 23, 2023

FIRST LESSON: Joshua 8:30-35

GOSPEL LESSON: John 4:39-42

Sermon Series: Revivals that Move Mountains Week 3

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- We are continuing with week 3 of our 8-week sermon series called “Revivals that Move Mountains.” This is a sermon series that is designed to get our minds, hearts and bodies refueled, renewed, re-energized and refocused on the work of the ministry that is always before us;
- Therefore in unpacking the role in which revivals have played in the scriptures, I would like to use *author Geoff Waugh’s book Revival Fire*, that I mentioned last week; in which we now have a slide for just in case you would like to take some notes, that reveals *9 commonalities that these revivals shared*;
 1. They occurred in times of moral darkness and national depression.

2. Each began in the heart of a consecrated servant of God who became the energizing power behind it [*only 1 spark*].
3. Each revival rested on the Word of God, and most were the result of proclaiming God's Word with power.
4. All resulted in a return to the worship of God.
5. Each witnessed the destruction of idols where they existed.
6. In each revival, there was a recorded separation from sin.
7. In every revival the people returned to obeying God's laws.
8. There was a restoration of great joy and gladness.
9. Each revival was followed by a period of national prosperity.

- Therefore, today's goal will be to look at the revivals that are occurring in both of our lessons today; see how these commonalities might reveal itself to us, **with the hope that** they make speak to our situation today.

- So before going into our lessons of scriptures today, I would like to continue where I left off with John the Baptist last week, as I am seeing an evolving conversation, that will address this week's lessons as well.
- So last week, I made the remark when studying John the Baptist's revival, that he was a leader I aspired **to grow up like**, for John the Baptist essentially knew how to develop the art of humility.
- For when Jesus came onto the scene to baptize with fire; just as John had been doing with water, what made John the Baptist a leader I aspire to be, is that John understood and knew his role and purpose;
- For John the Baptist understood that Jesus was not his competitor;
- He was not even threatened by the fact **that Jesus** attracted even some of his followers;
- For John the Baptist ended our gospel last week with saying, "**He must increase, so I must decrease!**"

- Thereby revealing to us how we might embody the covenant of what it means **to love God and love our neighbor.**
- For part of how you and I love in my mind, is by the understanding that love requires our roles in life, to sometimes increase and decrease at different stages in our life journey.
- For how else will the fruits of the Spirit really be able to come forth within us; [love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. \(Gal. 5: 22-23\)](#); if we choose to skirt this process?
- Therefore a way that we might apply this increase/decrease declaration of John the Baptist, **is by** intentionally **making space** at the table for one another, **so that every one** can have a chance of cultivating and bearing their gifts to the world.
- For why I am drawn to this phraseology of **making space** in my sermons and over all messaging;
- Is sometimes I believe the reason why it can be difficult for some of us to **make space** for one another, is

because we have substituted the words “**make-space**” for the word “**re-place,**” in our minds...

- Furthermore, the Trinitarian God (Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer) **is begging humanity...God is begging us.... to stop doing this!**
- Similar to a parent taking a road trip with their kids; and the siblings in the back of the car keep being in one another’s bubble.....and the parent says...Stephen, Alex, _Kirstie_____ **Stop!**
- I think **why so many of us** have troubles **with making space for one another;**
- **Making space** for one another’s ideas,
- **Making space** for one another’s thoughts,
- **Making space** for one another’s gifts,
- **Making space** for one another’s contributions,
- Is because some of us might fear that if we were to make space for a person who possesses **either similar gifts** as us, **or newer gifts** than us, **or perhaps fearfully— even better gifts** than us, then we who are the “space-makers”, **will be replaced.**

- And so putting into this conversation, our first lesson of Joshua this morning, **what I love about Joshua** and furthermore why he was the revival sparker of his day, is because Joshua demonstrates how we might rectify this fear within us....**the fear of making space.**
- For not only did Joshua, similar to John the Baptist, understand the art of making space, in Joshua's revival, we see the beauty of what can be accomplished when we choose to do so;
- For starters, Joshua was the appointed successor to Moses (Deuteronomy 31:1–8; 34:9) and a charismatic warrior who led Israel in the conquest of Canaan after the Exodus from Egypt.
- After sending spies into Canaan to report on the enemy's morale, Joshua led the Israelites in an invasion across the Jordan River.
- He took the important city of Jericho and then captured other towns in the north and south until most of Palestine was brought under Israelite control. He divided the conquered lands among the 12 tribes of Israel and then

bade farewell to his people (Joshua 23), admonishing them to be loyal to the God of the covenant.

- However, how Joshua was able to accomplish any of this is revealed in our first lesson of today; for before Joshua even fully went forth in his leadership, he **first made sure to read a copy** of the law of Moses in the presence of all the people on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim.
- To connect this act with our Church dynamics of the day, **one of the first things I did** as your pastor, is within the first 6 months of my serving here at Lincoln First, is I began to **read**...
- **I would read** everything I could get my hands on to to learn more about you.
- **I read** the past sermons,
- **I read** the past news articles,
- **I read** some of the Church history....
- All so I could begin to get to understand more about the people I would be called to lead...

- **Therefore this in my theological mind is why Joshua was reading in our first lesson;**
- For Moses was the original leader of this revival that would lead the people to the Promise Land;
- However Moses would not quite make it to the Promise Land...
- For God did show Moses the Promise Land as God promised....God just did not let Moses enter in.
- For, perhaps in this, we are witnessing another example of **increase/decrease at its finest...**
- For in order for Joshua to increase, Moses would have to decrease;
- To allow Joshua to be the one to get the Israelites into the Promised Land.
- For the transfer of leadership didn't mean that Moses was replaced;
- For it took Moses to get Joshua there;
- And Joshua wouldn't be there, if Moses didn't end here....increase....decrease!!

- And so once again, one of the first things that Joshua did while he was there, is our story tells us that he began to read;
- And why this is such a significant point, is because it is in this action, that we see why this increase/decrease proclamation is not one that should threaten any of us, for what **Joshua's leadership reveals is that making space, doesn't mean replace;**
- For it is profoundly significant that the people of Israel pledged themselves to keep God's law.
- As soon as they had gained a solid foothold in the new land, rather than forget former vows and neglect reverent obedience, they renewed their covenant to keep the law of God.
- Furthermore, Joshua recognized that it was Moses who was guided by God to write the law.
- In other words, Joshua did not come onto the scene to discard the law,
- Joshua came on to the scene **to fulfill the law...**In particular to fulfill the same law that God inspired and prescribed through Moses;

- Furthermore, it was because Joshua understood this increase/decrease leadership model that through him, numbers 9-12 were fulfilled during his leadership;
- (9) In each revival, there was a recorded separation from sin.

10. In every revival the people returned to obeying God's laws.

11. There was a restoration of great joy and gladness.

12. Each revival was followed by a period of national prosperity.

- Furthermore, why I have been speaking about this increase/decrease point for two weeks now, is [so that we all can get to the inner revival that is being sparked within the Samaritan women of our gospel today:](#)
- For I would also submit that how Joshua and the other biblical leaders we have read about, made such progress in their own life journey's— was not by happenstance;
- On the contrary, the biblical leaders we have been reading about I would imagine, that their journeys' started somewhere similar to this Samaritan's woman;

- For as I paint the scene for us today for where our gospel is coming from;
- As soon as the disciples returned with food, the Word tells us that this woman left for the city.
- She left to gather water for her thirsty family.
- And Jesus met this Samaritan woman at the well;
- In which Jesus chose that to be the time in which he would initiate a somewhat disruptive conversation on the topic of what it means to increase/decrease;
- And like other biblical scholars have weighed in on the discomfort of this conversation, it is important to note that conversations such as she and Jesus were having is spoiled when others are present.
- **It was a conversation meant to be private—heart-to-heart.**
- Teaching us that some truths do not fit public discourse.
- For some people's problems are best cared for in private interviews.
- And so here is how the interview unfolded; for John 4:7 begins with presenting to us;

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8 (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.

And here is when the increase/decrease speech begins:

v10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

And here is where we see the woman question the increase/decrease message by saying:

11 , "Sir,c] you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater

than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?”

And here is when Jesus then reiterates the increase/decrease messaging by saying to her, v13“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, **14** but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

- And so this Church was essentially the interview as scholars would call it between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.
- Furthermore, I would be remiss if I did not name this is perhaps one of the toughest interviews I have ever witnessed.
- For typically we as people do not like to be confronted in this manner;

- Typically we as people, do not like to be exposed in this manner;
- For there were some other parts that I left out of this interview for time sake, that I encourage you to read on your own out of John 4,
- However, the main point that I believe we need to really take a closer look at, is this idea that to increase/decrease is a necessary part of our spiritual growth and learning, if we wish to fully thrive;
- Saint Augustine says it even better; "Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility."
- You see Church, some people may think of humility as becoming weak, unworthy, and valueless,

- Real humility is a powerful soul force, which when unleashed, can bring a person into a place of purpose, vision, power and even wealth.
- This Samaritan woman therefore had a personal decision to make as did every leader that we already discussed thus far,
- Will she accept this invitation of eternal waters, even if it required her to confess some uncomfortable things about herself;
- Even if it required her to reconsider some things as it pertained to herself, her traditions, her worldview, her upbringing?
- And we see what her decision must have been, for our gospel today allows us to witness how her inner revival began to unleash within her community as a result.
- For as we listen to our gospel of today with a new set of ears and understanding;

V39 Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done."

40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.

41 And many more believed because of his word.

42 They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

- And I tell you Church, we too got a glimpse of what a communal revival can look like at it's finest this week at Vacation Bible School, that I believe should be now called Family Bible School— for it was indeed a family affair!
- For I could see how each of us coming together, practiced the art of increase/decrease and the results were what you see before you...(show the pictures)

- For each person stepped up to their understood role and purpose, and most importantly we supported each other wherever we could and with whatever we had;
- And so again, what you see is what is before you;
- Most importantly ...What we don't see is immeasurable;

For the mustards seeds are everywhere;

The kin-dom is here—the kin-dom is now...

Christ is Risen...Christ is Risen today....

All which informs us that The Best Is Yet To

Come....Amen!