

Sermon Notes for July 21st

Let's "set our stage" with a story by Lisa Harper from *Hebrews The Nearness of King Jesus*:

"In the movie, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Tom, a symbol for anyone with brown skin - was unfairly accused and convicted simply because of his race. The camera pans to Atticus, his lawyer, the only white man who had behaved honorably by insisting all people deserve to be treated with fairness and dignity. Atticus is brokenhearted over the verdict. He gathers his papers, shoves them into his briefcase, and turns to walk out the courtroom.

That is when the blacks sitting in the balcony begin standing up. First one by one. Then dozens of them.

A kindly black pastor taps Atticus's precocious daughter, "Scout", on the shoulder. "Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passing." She glances up to question and then realizes the entire balcony is standing in deference to her father. She scrambles to her feet and stretches as tall as she can so as to show her esteem for her father.

I cry every time I watch that scene. Partly because I can identify with having a gruff, distant dad. And partly because it's such a poignant reminder of how Christians should effectively stand in deference to King Jesus, whom Hebrews depicts as (the pioneer of our salvation.)"

Hebrews 2:10-18 (Voice)

"It only makes sense that God, by whom and for whom everything exists, would choose to bring many of us to His side by using suffering to perfect Jesus, *the founder of our faith*, the pioneer of our salvation. As *I will show you*, it's important that the One who brings us to God and those who are brought to God become one, *since we are all from one*

Father. This is why Jesus was not ashamed to call us His family, saying,
in the words of the psalmist,

I will speak Your Name to My brothers and sisters
when I praise You in the midst of the community.[Psalm 22:22]

And in the words of Isaiah,
I will wait for the Eternal One.[Isaiah 8:17]

And again,

Look, here I am with the children God has given Me.[Isaiah 8:18]

Since we, the children, are all creatures of flesh and blood, Jesus took on flesh and blood, so that by dying He could destroy the one who held power over death—the devil— and destroy the fear of death that has always held people captive.

So notice—His concern here is not for the welfare of the heavenly messengers, but for the children of Abraham. He had to become as human as His sisters and brothers *so that when the time came*, He could become a merciful and faithful high priest of God, called to reconcile a sinful people. Since He has also been tested by suffering, He can help us when we are tested.”

So ends our text.

THIS IS THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD!

THANKS BE TO GOD! Amen

John Wesley, in a sermon entitled, “The Promise of Understanding”, reveals:

God is “infinitely good,” and “made all things good,” and “rejoices in the good of all ...creatures.” (www.umc.org) Our good God does not send suffering. According to Wesley, it is “entirely contrary to [God’s] own nature, and so destructive of [God’s] noblest works.” Suffering is not punishment for sin or a judgment from God. We suffer, and the world suffers, because we are human and part of a system of processes and a physical environment where things go wrong.

Jesus became flesh - and Jesus feels us! Jesus “gets” us! Jesus “suffers” with us as Jesus takes on our identity! Someone who studies suffering and vulnerability and our being broken and made whole is one of our favorite sociologist, Brene’ Brown. I have condensed part of of interview she had about 3 years ago on a radio show called, “On Being.”

Ms. Brown started her massive research project 6 months prior to 9-11: “Over the course of the last 12 years, I have seen fear absolutely run roughshod over our families. And I have seen us go to these crazy lengths to protect ourselves and our children from the uncertainty of the world today. I’ve not only seen that through my lens as a researcher, but certainly experienced it as a parent, and as a college professor. I see students come to us who have never had experiences, real experiences, with adversity. And how that shows up is hopelessness. One of the most interesting things I’ve found in doing this work is that the wholehearted share in common a profound sense of hopefulness. The literature on hope, very specifically C. R. Snyder’s work from the University of Kansas at Lawrence, shows that, “Hope is a function of struggle.”

Ms. Tippett: I think that’s one of the most stunning sentences that I saw in your writing.

Ms. Brown: And that hope is not an emotion. Hope is a cognitive, behavioral process that we learn when we experience adversity, when we have relationships that are trustworthy, when people have faith in our ability to get out of a jam.

Ms. Tippett: Which is different from this pattern of having faith in our children, which means telling them everything they do is wonderful and shielding them from pain as long as we can. But boy, we know this, don't we, this desire to create a beautiful world and life and experience for these people you love?

Ms. Brown: But you know what? I think we lose sight of the beauty. The most beautiful things I look back on in my life are coming out from underneath things I didn't know I could get out from underneath. The moments I look back in my life and think, "God, those are the moments that made me," were moments of struggle."

{Hope is brokenhearted on the way to becoming wholehearted. Hope is a function of struggle.} - (From the above interview)

Jesus took on our suffering, our shame; all our struggles - and sacrificed His life for us. Jesus gave us the ultimate Hope because of His being the most merciful and most faithful High Priest of God.

Before that Jesus told the disciples in Caesarea Philippi: (Matthew 16:24-26 Voice) "If you want to follow Me, you must deny yourself *the things you think you want*. You must pick up your cross and follow Me. The person who wants to save his life must lose it, and she who loses her life for Me will find it."

If your cross is small and light, that is great. You might be more wholehearted. You might have fewer struggles. But look around...see if you can help another whose cross is not small and certainly not light. There is no shame in that because we are all broken.

AND THAT'S THE MESSAGE!