

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

Rev. Jason S. Glombicki

March 6, 2022

That was an odd Gospel for Lent. We usually hear the resurrection stories *after* Easter not in the weeks leading up to it. Well, if you haven't heard, today begins our 5-week experience with the Year W lectionary. The "W" stands for "women," and the lectionary text are translated by Dr. Wilda Gafney with a lens towards women's stories and experiences. So, the translations of the texts are going to feel a little different, and the types of stories we hear during Lent will be different as well. Perhaps this is the point of this experience!

In today's gospel reading, we heard of the second ending to the gospel of Mark. This ending was probably added later and was not original to the text but is included in the commonly accepted Christian canon. What we read today drew my attention to how Mary Magdalene's story was rejected by those who were mourning and weeping. Eventually, Jesus appeared to the eleven and rebuked them for their lack of faith and stubbornness. For me, as a male, this time I was nudged into looking at the lectionary with a W lens, or a womanist lens. This lens allowed me to see the text in new ways. After all, the regular translation we read from, that's the New Revised Standard Version, says that Mary was rejected and that Jesus rebuked their stubbornness, but I never noticed that until now.

While it seems odd for us to stand in the wilderness of Lent and talk about Jesus' resurrection, I think this text helps draw us into the journey ahead in a new way. It's like we get a glimpse of the end so that the journey ahead can allow us to pick

up on the tidbits here and there in different ways. When we know that in the end Jesus will say to “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to all creation.” Then, that can root our experience in a new way. It can help us refocus ourselves to explore what the good news is for all of creation.

That's where our reading from Genesis comes in. You can't go any further back than the book of Genesis. There we heard, "The Sovereign God crafted the human from the dust of the humus and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a living soul." It was just a few days ago that we gathered and smeared dust, ash, dirt onto our foreheads. Last Wednesday, we were reminded that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Now, today, we're reminded that it is from dust that we were created. That from the dust that "every creature of the field and every bird of the air" were created. From dust we came, and from dust we were given the breath of life. And from that first breath, "the Sovereign God said, 'It is not good that the human should be alone.'" From the dust God formed humankind to be in relationship, to find connection with animals but to also find partnership with others. And that final verse we heard went like this, "And they were, the two of them, naked, the man and his woman [or the woman and her man], and were not ashamed." Here in that moment, these two humans were exposed, real, and whole. God's desire for humankind is to be whole, to be in relationship with other humans and creatures, and to be free from shame.

Yet, how often in this world does shame steer the boat? Shame, as one author describes it, "is the uncomfortable sensation we feel in the pit of our stomach when it seems we have no safe haven from the judging gaze of others." But, it's also not even necessary for a disapproving person to be present; it can simply be the imagination of another's judgement. It's the experience of betraying a norm that the individual views as desirable that makes the act feel truly uncomfortable. Shame is when we view ourselves in a negative light. Shame is the blaming oneself for being a victim. Shame is feeling ugly because you don't look like airbrushed

models. Shame is feeling that perfection is the only acceptable outcome. Shame is the voice in your head telling you that “*you* are bad,” that “*you* are unlovable,” and that “*you* are a failure.”

Yet, what Jesus reminds us of today is that we are to share the good news with all of creation. We are to look back toward how God created humankind to be. To embrace what it means to be shameless, not as in doing whatever to whomever we want. Rather, to be shameless in embracing that we were created in the image of God. That we were molded by God from dust. That into dust we received the breath of God. That we are loveable, beautiful, and wonderfully made.

And, perhaps that's the journey this lectionary and our Lenten Limitations and Liberations experience have before us. To glance at God's gift of sharing the good news with all of creation and then reminding ourselves of what that good news actually is. To stand here at the beginning of the journey to remind ourselves that our varied bodies are beautiful. That women's bodies are beautiful. That trans-bodies are beautiful. That the scars of childbirth or gender affirmation surgery are beautiful. That stretchmarks, dark skin, light skin, and plus sized skin are beautiful. That men's bodies that look femme are beautiful. That women's bodies that look masc are beautiful. That bodies that take a little femme and a little masc and a lot of whatever makes them feel shameless in their skin, well that's darn beautiful.

Cause you see, the gospel will remind us over and again that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. And, the assumption in that statement is that we will first need to love ourselves before we can love another. And then, the challenge of all of that is to find a balance in our lives between loving ourselves and loving our neighbors.

So, I think this is going to be an unforgettable Lenten journey. It's going to challenge us to look at things in new ways. It's going to feel a little foreign, but in the end, it'll probably teach us something important about our God, our neighbors, and ourselves. It'll reveal our God who is hopeless, helpless, madly in love with you. It'll reveal a God who wants nothing more for us than to live shamelessly into how God created us to be. It'll reveal places where we can live that out, and it'll challenge us to let others live that out too. And throughout the journey, maybe we'll be able to see God anew, maybe we'll be able to embrace our neighbors afresh, and maybe we'll be able to shamelessly be who God created us to be. Amen.