

Sunday closest to June 8

Proper 5
Year B
RCL

[Genesis 3:8-15](#)

[Psalm 130](#)

[2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1](#)

[Mark 3:20-35](#)

When I was in the 8th grade, our class went on a class trip to a local amusement park. Toward the end of the day, my friends wanted to go on a ride that I opted out of. So, I found the theatre and sat down for the next show. I can't remember the actual show. In fact, I was probably thinking how uncool I was for being in there but that's middle school for you and another sermon. What I do remember though is the last song. It was Sister Sledge, "We are Family". The whole cast came out, confetti descended from the ceiling, there was dancing and laughing and celebration. Some of the lyrics still echo in my head- share in the world's delights and have high hopes for the future.

Jesus redefined many, many things in his life. He flipped things on end and sometimes rather harshly. Who is in God's family? We might ask ourselves in another way- who is included? Or really the real question might be, "who is not included?" Those were cutting edge and risky questions to ask back then. And while we've come far, it's incredibly clear with everything going on around us that we still have far to go, and those questions must still be asked.

So, how does Jesus come to this proclamation? It's early in his ministry. He was baptized by John the Baptizer. He began healing and casting out demons. He started ruffling some feathers around commonly held beliefs and understandings. He even appointed his disciples and sent them forth with a mission. It had been a whirlwind and

the pace doesn't slow down now. The crowds have already caught on to him and they swarming him so much so he cannot eat. There's this huge convergence of people on Jesus, including his family.

It's not an overly positive memory of this event. His family is noted as wanting to restrain him. We might wonder: Why do they want to take hold of them? Are they seeking to protect him? Is it out of embarrassment for him and his family? He's certainly not fitting in or belonging to what's the norm. Who wants to see their family member be that person? Will their honor and standing in the community be questioned? Or, maybe they see him shaking up things and don't want him to suffer the consequences like the cross.

But Jesus continues to act- he doesn't let his family or the scribes, anyone or anything, deter him. Because the Kingdom of God, that which Jesus is proclaiming and is the living embodiment of, is not blocked by anything. Think of that odd little parable he told in response to the scribes. Another attempt at hindering Jesus, they illogically claim that he is evil- Satan wouldn't drive out himself- it just doesn't make any sense. Jesus counters with a parable about a man who was robbed. He's a strong man. But in order to be taken over, a person must restrain him first in order to win.

In organizational theory, there is a theory called Force Field Analysis. In order to make changes, you must first address all forces or energies around you- both ones that might restrain you and ones that might drive or energize you. But you can't move without first addressing what is restraining you. We as a people still have so many restraining forces holding us back from loving our neighbors as ourselves. Sometimes it is our family and how we grew up and how we were taught to understand the world. Sometimes its churches or institutions or places that we trusted and didn't know any better at the time. But they made an imprint on us forever nonetheless. Sometimes it's

our friends or colleagues who not only believe differently than us but their beliefs are toxic. Or how about that even bigger one- our culture? The expectations culture places upon us in telling us how to fit in and be the best or most successful. There is no question that there are systemic changes needed to push those forces back so that God's light and love can be ever more present.

We must be careful and tender when we do this work, especially when we use words like family. For some people family is or has been painful. Some families are closed, exclusive. Jesus is redefining family here. Opening up the tribe in the fullest sense. Open. Inclusive. All of those words we like to use for churches but then sometimes fall into the same closed off ways when it becomes insiders and outsiders. The family that we are in, the kingdom or reign of God, is a family of belonging. Of hope for unity of all God's creatures. That entrenched divisions may cease. That fear is cast out. That no one will ever feel dehumanized again. That true love is always the motivation for our actions.

As a part of God's love, as ones who embody God's love, we are also ones that help redefine and heal. We are the ones to speak peace in chaos. Acceptance into intolerance. Authenticity into fakeness. Relationship and connectedness into isolation. Superstar Lin-Manuel Miranda tweeted this this week: "YOU ARE SO LOVED AND WE LIKE HAVING YOU AROUND. And then he asks us to envision tying one end of that sentence to our hearts, the other end to everyone who loves us in this life, even if clouds obscure your view* He gets it. I like to imagine God saying this same thing. There are so many things, both that we can control but many that we can't, that could obscure our views. But the reality is, that tie exists between our hearts and God's, and our hearts and everyone else in the family of God. Which, is everyone. Be the redefinition of family. What happens to other members of the family happens to us. Don't let anyone or anything restrain you from proclaiming the love of God.