

Sunday closest to June 15

Proper 6
Year C
RCL

[2 Samuel 11:26-12:10,13-15](#)

[Psalm 32](#)

[Galatians 2:15-21](#)

[Luke 7:36-8:3](#)

People are more than the worst things they've done in their lives. This is a saying that Sister Helen Prejean (Pray-John) lived through out her ministry to prisons, and in particular, in walking beside those on death row. A spiritual advisor to convicted killers and rapists, she was no stranger to hearing gruesome sins against society.

Today's readings highlight not only that sin, how humans can be so broken, do horrific things to one another, but they highlight that in the end, to Jesus, people are more than the worst things they've done.

On one hand, we have the story of Bathsheba and Uriah. Most of us are pretty familiar with this story of an exploitation of power. King David, a king mighty in power, saw Bathsheba bathing, sent messengers to her and took her for himself.

He knew she was married and that her husband was at the time in battle fighting loyalty for his king. But that didn't stop David. After she became pregnant with his child, David sent for her husband. Uriah sat outside of the king's gate refusing to go home to his wife because of his loyalty to his fellow warriors still sleeping in the fields at night. So what did David do? He sent Uriah to the front lines to what was a sure and certain death. After he was killed, we find ourselves at the beginning of today's reading.

Nathan, a courageous prophet, confronts David with a parable- showing David that he is the one responsible for all of these actions- for all of the violence that has fallen upon the family of Bathsheba and Uriah. And in that moment, instead of David lashing out more, or having Nathan himself killed, David hears himself in this story, listens to Nathan. And confesses the great sins he committed.

On the other hand, in the Gospel story, we have an unnamed woman with unnamed sins. The story tells us that everyone in the city knew she was a sinner, although the nature of her sin remains unclear. She had heard Jesus was at a dinner party and barged in to be before him. She interrupted a dinner party so she could acknowledge her wrongs and seek forgiveness. Simon, the Pharisee,

like King David, doesn't get what is happening before him. So, Jesus, like Nathan, tells a parable. Jesus shows him how forgiveness works.

Both are instances of sin and redemption: some, too painful to listen to, some, too hard to learn from without being shown in parable. These parables that we heard use story to reveal deeper truths about the people in the situation and unveil something deep within them and about how God works.

A sin, a transgression as the psalmist would say, to go astray, deviate, offend, to miss the mark. We of course focus a lot on this language in Lent, how we can repent, turn away from and turn towards God and right relationship with creation and Creator. But the reality is, grievous sins and every day sins exist simultaneously around us at all times. This is not to be flippant or depress us, but to acknowledge and name the world we inhabit. But there's a different spin on today's readings than in Lent. Instead of this reading focusing on the expensive oil, the poor among us, and preparation for Jesus for Burial, as it is in other gospels, this reading in Luke's focus is about forgiveness.

So what is our Christian responsibility to the pain of the world, some that happens to us personally, some we cause, some we witness, some we read about or share with our friends or family? Where is there hope? How do we move to a

greater understanding into forgiveness and grace in our everyday interactions?

Richard Rohr, Franciscan, priest, and spiritual author has a lot to say about this topic. He comments in a youtube video that 2/3 the teachings of Jesus are about forgiveness. 2/3. And that if we truly listen to Jesus' teachings, and we seek to imitate him, then forgiveness for ourselves and others will be first and foremost among our priorities and responsibilities.

That's all well and good, but we all know that the spiritual discipline of Forgiveness can be one of the most challenging ones we approach, whether we are new in our walk in faith or have been doing this all our lives. So how do we engage in this discipline? Rohr compares forgiveness to letting go. BUT, it's not about denying it, or repressing it, and simply releasing it into the universe. To forgive, according to Rohr, is to hand over it all to God- for, as Christians, we don't empty ourselves out to be nothing. We empty ourselves out to be filled with God. He calls this releasement. It doesn't fully work unless there's something better to fill it, something safe, comforting, loving. If we're able to sit in silence with God, we can surrender the pain of betrayal, of hurt, of sin, and we find that those things are not us, it's not our identity at all.

Christian forgiveness is not about excusing bad behavior though. Sister Helen Prejean's conversations with convicts included an invitation for them to take responsibility for their actions and admit their wrongdoings. Nathan called out David, and David responded in turn. The woman, knowing her sins, came to give them to Jesus, came to name them. We gather in community every week to lift one another up, to hold each other's pain, anger, and hurt, and to listen to how we can all make reconciliation happen in our own personal lives and in the world.

These were really tough readings to hear today. They're hard for us to unpack and make sense of them because this is so deeply personal. Just like when horrific things happen in our world. But Jesus asks us to deeply reflect on this heavy spiritual topic. Because there is hope in them. Tears may endure but joy comes in the morning. Happy are they whose sin is put away. Jesus cancels the woman's sins at the dinner table. And that's it, it's not a pause so they can come back and we have to figure out how fix them again and again and again. God surrounds us in these troubling times. We all have hurt people unintentionally. And sometimes, we've hurt them intentionally. People have hurt us unintentionally, and sometimes intentionally. Power, ego, and superiority are quite powerful things. But the redirection of one's heart and life, the

reorientation to wholeness is dependent on the ability to name it, to be in relationship with one another, come before one another and God acknowledging what happened. And, letting it go.

Easier said than done right? Sometimes, it can take days, months, even years to process it. It's a good thing we don't do it alone. We are surrounded by a community who has all been there, and by a God that cancels out the pain in our hearts by showing us we are worthy to be loved. People are more than the worst things they've done in their lives. And we are more than the mistakes we make.

God believes that, do you?

Sources used in this sermon:

<http://myemail.constantcontact.com/Richard-Rohr-s-Meditation--Forgiving-Ourselves.html?soid=1103098668616&aid=gt3HM1lv6h4>

<http://www.oprah.com/spirit/What-I-Would-Tell-My-Younger-Self>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghxiSk9suNs>