

The Sermon - In 10 Sentences Or Less

Surprise the World (Week 7) - Watching God's Bread Rise:



- 1) Making the claim that the world or country is getting worse is almost impossible to prove: none of us possess a perspective wide enough or moral compass accurate enough to validate that claim, and in fact it may just be a product of us having far more information about the world than previous generations.
- 2) To redirect or reframe that idea, consider a statement made famous by both Martin Luther King Jr. and Desmond Tutu (in South Africa): "The moral arc of the universe is long, but bends toward justice."
- 3) Alternatively, consider Jesus' simple yet powerful and positive parables in Matthew 13.31-33 about the Kingdom of God growing like a mustard plant or yeast in bread (which you can find mirrored in our own Presbyterian creeds, i.e. The Confession of 1967, 9.54-9.55).
- 4) In regard to the latter metaphor, Jesus is using an everyday image (making bread) to show that we will see Kingdom growth out in the ordinary world, and it will be gigantic in its effect (three measures of flour in 13.33 equals 500 lbs. of flour).
- 5) Michael Frost, author of "Surprise the World," says in chp. 7 that we should see God at work in the world bringing about more and more reconciliation, justice, beauty, and wholeness/healing.
- 6) Thus, St. Paul offers us the same guidance in Philippians 4.8 that we hear in chp. 7 of our summer book: if it's good, pure, excellent, or commendable, be intentional about dwelling on those things.
- 7) Basic brain science tells us that if we live stressed, tired, anxious, or overly-busy lives, then we see the outside world as a threat, and lose our capacity to see God at work; though he didn't know it, St. Paul's advice in Phil. 4.8 seeks to counteract that human instinct.
- 8) What Phil. 4.8 is extolling has come to be called spiritual awareness or attention, phrases that began to be used as early as 200/300 A.D.
- 9) So how can you pause and reflect upon or record for yourself how you've seen God's Kingdom growing in the everyday world around you, and how could we do that as a church more deliberately?
- 10) As poet Elizabeth Barrett-Browning put it (in the 1800s), echoing the famous story of Moses' calling in Exodus 3: "Earth is crammed full of heaven, and every common bush is afire with God, but only he who sees takes off his shoes."

"Surprise the World!" Debriefing Questions

1) B = BLESS

- How can KirkWood help you live a life that blesses others Monday - Saturday?
- What could we do together at KW to bless our neighbors and friends? (Feel free to get very specific with your ideas - like, what could we do during Advent/Christmas?)

2) E = EAT

- How could we eat together more, and especially in a way that allows us to invite friends and neighbors not affiliated with KW to come and eat with us? What ideas come to mind?
- What do you think of these specific ideas?:
 - Monthly rotating dinner groups, something like 2-3 KW families eating together and perhaps inviting other non-KW friends to join?
 - A weekly or biweekly midweek opportunity to get together in the Fellowship Hall, maybe midday or early evening, with coffee, snacks, and/or desserts provided? (This might be a low key, casual way to introduce non-KW friends to the KW family.)
 - Monthly church lunches on Sunday after the worship services, or monthly evening tailgates and/or bonfires, like we've done this summer?

3) L = LISTEN TO SPIRIT

- How can we help you listen to the Spirit more in your life, and respond to the Spirit's prompting to reach out?
- How can we listen better to the leading of God's Spirit as a church family?
- If you, as a congregant, have an "idea" or are being "spirit led" to ask or do something, how can we as a church get behind you, support you, and empower you to follow God's leading?

4) L = LEARN CHRIST

- How can we help you "learn Christ" better or more consistently?
- What if we devoted one portion of each calendar year to focusing on the gospels and Jesus? For example, maybe reading through a gospel together during Lent, and then discussing it in our small groups, Sunday School classes, and Sunday services?

5) S = SENT (PAY ATTENTION TO GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD)

- How can we help you pay attention to how God is at work in the world around us? Namely, as the book says, for the purpose of reconciliation, justice, beauty, and wholeness?
- How can we pay attention together as a church family, for example in worship on Sundays from time to time?

6) CHP. 8 - THE NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND NURTURE

- If you don't have one already, how can we help you find a group of people at KW who can encourage and help you to live the BELLS?
- If you're in a small group or Sunday School class already, how can your group/class prioritize the BELLS for one another?
- Would a monthly smaller, deeper, more intimate triad (3 people, you and two others) be a kind of group that would help you prioritize and thrive at the BELLS in your life?