



March 20, 2022

Sermon Series

Full to the Brim

Lenten Introduction: *The scriptures for this Lenten season are filled with parables and promises of God's abundant and expansive grace. Jesus as a mother hen, a prodigal son welcomed home, a fig tree nurtured with care and hope, precious oil poured out lovingly and freely, stones shouting out with praise —these sacred texts are brimming with a Gospel of grace. We've done nothing to deserve or earn this grace, and yet, like water, it spills over. Full to the Brim is an invitation—into a radically different Lent, into a full life. It's an invitation to be authentically who you are, to counter scarcity and injustice at every turn, to pour out even more grace wherever it is needed. When we allow ourselves to be filled to the brim with God's lavish love, that love spills over. It reaches beyond ourselves; like water, it rushes and flows, touching everything in its path.*

Luke 13:1-9 NRSV

¹At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?" ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them — do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did." ⁶Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' ⁸He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

Bible Conversation

What comes to mind when you hear Jesus say, (twice) "...unless you repent, you too will all perish"?

What comes to mind when you think of a vineyard?

What might it mean for a fig tree to be in a vineyard in the first place?

For context, what happens directly before and after this story?

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Reflection by Pastor Rob Zahn

Dead Poet's Society. If you haven't, you need to see it. If you haven't noticed by now, I like movies. Not only do I like movies, I love them. They are not only entertainment (though I like that aspect as well), but also works of art. And like all art, there are many layers and of course, the meaning/beauty is always in the eye of the beholder.

In Dead Poet's Society there is this scene where Mr. Keating, played by the late, great Robin Williams, has his students walking in a circle in the courtyard of the school. He asks them to just walk. It takes no more than thirty seconds or so for all of the students in the class to begin to step/walk to the same beat, the same rhythm, the same stride, and the same direction. They all started out a bit different, but ultimately they all conformed to a standard, a 'norm'.

Mr. Keating's lesson was about conformity and the struggle to remain 'you' in the midst of social pressure. However, for our purposes, I would say the lesson has more to do with what happens after a 'norm' is set. If those students kept going for a while, if they kept walking in lock step, the 'norm' would become an expectation. It wouldn't be long before the students might notice some classmates who couldn't quite do it in the 'normal' expected way, or maybe simply didn't want to do it in the 'normal' expected way. Those students might be labeled as 'incapable' and weeded out. In religious circles they might even be labeled as 'sinners' and 'chopped down'.

This is a parable that hits close to home for absolutely everyone...every one. Yes, you too. And me. We all have a tendency to label and cuff off people who don't do life the way we do, who don't look the way we do, who don't think the way we do. When we do that, when we cut people off and when we cut people down, the opportunity for the Kingdom of God to be ushered in here on earth perishes. We can do something about that, or we can do nothing. There is no in-between.

Reflection Conversation

In what ways might you intentionally or unintentionally 'cut people off' from you or from the life God intends?

The 1 Question:

All of us (yes, all of us) 'cut people out/down.' Who, what kind of people, do you intentionally or unintentionally dismiss? (Lazy people? People that do not produce fruit in society? Or maybe think about ideologies: democrats/republicans, or other faith perspectives, or specific leaders. Biden? Trump? Clinton? Putin?) Be honest...remember all people are children of God...all people.

Closing Prayer

Creator God, we know that you are a God who has already filled us to the brim with love and acceptance, even if we don't always feel and experience it in the midst of the busyness of our daily lives. Give us the strength to allow your continually flowing love to make a mess through us for the sake of the other. Help us to be like you, loving, caring, accepting, and merciful...at all costs. Amen.

Next Week's Bible Theme and Text:

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Text: Luke 15:1-3; 11b-32

1 week.
1 story.
1 message.

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