

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost—Proper 8—Year B
II Samuel 1:1, 17-27
Psalm 130
II Corinthians 8:7-15
Mark 5:21-43

I came to **St. Luke's** in **2004**, halfway through **George W. Bush's** presidency. I can remember when protesters *burnt effigies* of **President Bush**. Then, we saw *effigies* of **President Obama burn**. And in the last few years, we've seen *effigies burn* of **President Trump**.

In the last few weeks, we're seeing **protesters follow administration officials** into **restaurants** or **setting up outside their homes**. People are regularly gathering and yelling, "**Shame! Shame! Shame!**" as a **chant against those with whom they disagree**.

We're seeing **Maxine Waters** call for this *strategy* to continue and increase, **telling supporters to "go out and confront administration officials wherever they show their faces and tell them they're not welcome anymore, anywhere."** In the days since, I've heard other **Democratic strategists** say people should **double-down** on this **strategy**. And the **President** didn't lower the temperature with his **tweet** in response, calling **Maxine Waters** "*an extraordinarily low IQ person*" and going on to say, "*She has just called for harm to supporters, of which there are many, of the Make America Great Again movement. Be careful what you wish for Max!*" Then, **Congresswoman Waters** cancelled events this week in **Texas** and **Alabama** due to **threats** she'd received—including a threat to **lynch** her. Scary words, especially when directed toward an African-American.

Commentator **Susan Page** noted this week, "*We have been saying the nation is polarized for years. We have gone beyond that. I don't think we have the words to describe the way people view one another on the two sides. It's like not only don't [people] talk to each other. We don't listen to each other.*" She went on to say, "*I worry that we're just becoming frayed in a way that will be very hard to knit back together.*"

And while this **hot rhetoric** might be "**good**" **political strategy**, it is *not* a **strategy** to be deployed by **those of us** who are **pledged** to our **baptismal vow to respect the dignity of every human being**. So, if these tactics have given you a good adrenaline rush, *I'm about to throw a cold, wet blanket on that.*

Please open your **Book of Common Prayer**. Turn to **page 855**—"What is the ministry of the laity? *The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world...*"

I agree with **Susan Page**. I *fear* we are becoming **frayed** in a way that will be very hard to **knit** back together, and I have come to believe that **the call of the Church in this time is to work as hard as we can to knit back together the frayed fabric of our society**. Does that mean people need to shut-up if they feel **policies** are **wrong** or **injustice** is being done or the **vulnerable** are being hurt? **No**. To hold before our eyes, or the eyes of a brother or sister,

the **tragic gap BETWEEN** the values we hold dear and profess **AND** the reality of our actions is *never* a wrong thing to do. **Attacking people’s personhood, using fear or shame as a tactic, using threatening words or actions, *not okay.***

Our ministry is to be a **ministry of reconciliation**. And as **Archbishop Tutu** and the experience of **South Africa** would remind us, *reconciliation* always holds within it a whole lot of **truth-telling**. But *our actions* are always seeking the *reconciliation* of the *enemy*, the *reconciliation* of the *other*. **What we are seeing playing out before our eyes is *not* the way of Jesus.**

So, let’s drop down into the text today. First, in our passage from **II Samuel**, we hear **David’s lament for Saul and Jonathan upon learning the news of their deaths**. But we forget that, for a season, *Saul was David’s enemy*. Jealousy had captured Saul’s heart, and **Saul sought to kill David**. There were times when **David** could have killed **Saul**, but he **chose not to do so**, instead, asking **Saul**, “**Why do you listen to the words of those who say, ‘David seeks to do you harm?’**” *David held open a space in his heart, refused to let go of the possibility that he and Saul could be reconciled.*

Can we hold space in our heart and refuse to let go of the possibility that we might be reconciled with those with whom we disagree?

And then the **gospel**. It starts out, “**When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side...**” Jesus keeps **crossing to the other side**. Jesus keeps **crossing to the other side**. And sometimes, he has to **go through fierce winds and raging waves** to get there.

What are we doing to cross to the other side, OR are we never leaving the safety of our shore?

In the **crossing before today’s crossing**, Jesus had come to the land of the Gerasenes, and there, he **healed a man who had been thrown out of his community because a whole host of unclean spirits had possessed him**. *He couldn’t even remember his name, his true name*; all he could *remember* was the name **Legion**—the name of all those unclean spirits.

Are we **losing touch with our own true name** and the true name of those with whom we **disagree**, settling instead for big labels, **Legion, Democrat, Republican**, and more **pejorative terms** than I can count that are **spewed like venom on social media**? *These labels aren’t who we are. Beloved son, beloved daughter, beloved one of God—this is our true name.*

The point is, **Jesus sought this man** whom *everyone else* had **locked up in shackles**, and Jesus sent the **unclean spirits packing**, and he *knit* that man back into the fabric of his community, and **THEN**, Jesus crossed again to the other side.

When he stepped out on the shore by the sea, one of the leaders of the synagogue named **Jairus** came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, “**My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.**” A leader of the synagogue—*power, position, prestige*—and none of that counts for anything when your child is sick. You’ll do anything, seek help from anyone, when your child is suffering.

But here's the thing, **things had not gone well for Jesus in his last outing in the synagogue. He had healed the man with the withered hand on the sabbath, and that had the Pharisees going and conspiring with the Herodians to see how they might destroy Jesus because he'd violated the law.** Jesus had every reason to say "no way" to Jairus, but Jesus is in the practice of crossing to the other side, so Jesus went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well."

She knew better than to do that. The **flow of blood** made her **ritually unclean**. No respectable **Jewish man** should be near her, let alone be touched by her. She knew her **position**, she had **no power, no prestige**; she had spent every penny she had on treatment, and **still** she was sick and in pain.

Chronic illness, chronic pain, no more resources, no more treatments, that will make you **desperate**. Observing *the ritual boundaries of purity don't mean squat* when your **health** and **wholeness** hang in the balance.

She risked reaching across all the divides that screamed at her, "Don't even try. Don't even think of trying." She touched his cloak. **Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.** Jesus felt the power go forth from him, and he turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?"

...He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

That woman dared to reach across to places that the whole culture told her she should not because *she knew couldn't be whole without reaching across*. And Jesus put himself in a position where the most vulnerable, those with whom he *most* shouldn't associate, could have access to him.

The culture is screaming right now that **Democrats shouldn't be reaching across to Republicans** and **Republicans shouldn't be reaching across to Democrats**, and **people in power shouldn't be traveling in crowds where the most vulnerable might touch them**, and the most vulnerable are losing hope that the most powerful even care—we are *hemorrhaging, all of us!* We are sick, and we've been sick for a long, long time.

We're going to have to risk crossing over and touching places we're being told not to touch, and we're going to have to let some power go forth from us to bring about the healing that is so needed and to **knit** back together the **frayed** fabric of our broken, broken relationships.

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further? *It's too late. She's dead. It's hopeless. Don't even try.*" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John...When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they *laughed at him.*

And if *we seek to cross to the other side*, if we refuse to believe that this frayed fabric just can't be knit back together, if we refuse to believe that this work of reconciliation is impossible because it's just *too broken*, if we *dare to say*, *our common humanity is not dead but only sleeping*, you can bet that **people are going to laugh at us.** *Are you willing to be laughed at? Are you willing not to join in the joke? Are you willing to have others in your tribe smirk at you? Call you naïve?*

Then Jesus put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Sometimes, the best work we will do will be in the quiet places, in small circles, when we dare to take someone by the hand and call one another back to life again; when we remind one another of what animates us and call each other to remember the life and dignity we hold in common. *Sometimes*, our best work is done away from the spotlight where *the ego* doesn't have time to *play to the crowd*. And Jesus is right, when we awaken the humanity in one another that is all but dead, when we risk reaching across with healing touch and connection, and that humanity rises up, we've got to feed it; we've got to give it something to eat.

Here's the thing, this morning, Jesus reached in multiple directions—he reached across to the powerful, to the leader of the synagogue, *not knowing* if that leader of the synagogue might also be conspiring with the Pharisees and Herodians who were seeking to destroy him AND he reached across to the most vulnerable, allowing them to touch him that they might find healing AND he reached across to the sheer human suffering of parents and the chronically ill AND he reached into that which was dead and called it back to life AND he did it quietly and without fanfare.

Can we cross to the other side and reach across into all these places? Our frayed society depends upon it. This is our call. This is our ministry. This is the work of our lifetime.

So, yes, **do the hard work of truth-telling and holding before yourself and one another and those with whom you disagree the tragic, tragic gap between our deepest values AND the reality of our actions, but *never lose sight of your ministry of reconciliation.***

Remember the **Bob Newhart Show** from the 1970's where he plays a psychologist? Well, he reprises a very similar role in a skit from 2001 which aired on MADtv. In the skit, he plays a *psychiatrist*—a patient comes to him seeking wise counsel, and his entire counsel is reduced to two words, **“*Stop it!*”** Any of you see that skit? You can catch it on Youtube. *So, brothers and sisters, if you are using shame as a weapon, stop it!* If you are *posting things on Facebook or liking other people's posts or sharing posts that demean and diminish the dignity of another, stop it!*

If you are losing sight of the humanity of those with whom you disagree, get closer, keep drawing closer until you can see your humanity reflected back to you in their eyes. Their salvation, their wholeness depends upon it, and not just theirs, but your own. We're so sick, and the only way we're going to be saved from this sickness that has infected our societal soul is to cross to the other side and touch places we've never touched.

This week, **find one place where you can knit just one stitch of our frayed fabric back together again.** With all the **faith** and **courage** you can muster, **reach across into the places you shouldn't; touch the *other*, touch an *enemy*, touch the *fringe* of the One who reached across and stretched his arms wide.** *When enough of us do that, then maybe our frayed, sick body, both individually AND collectively, will finally hear Jesus' words—“Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”* Amen.

The Rev. Cynthia K. R. Banks
St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Boone, NC
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