



Sermon, June 10, 2018
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Coburg and Junction City United Methodist Churches

Articulating the Path 2: “Putting the Pieces Together”

Scriptures:

Luke 10:1-12 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ² He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³ Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ ⁶ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷ Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹ cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰ But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹² I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

James 1:16-27 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved.

¹⁷ Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸ In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

¹⁹ You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness. ²¹ Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

²² But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³ For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴ for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵ But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

²⁶ If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Opening – computer jokes

Here's a list of the latest computer related best-sellers...

- A Tale of Two CD's
- Gates of Wrath
- Gone with the Windows
- War and PC
- Moby Disk

Do you remember the song by the Beatles, "Yesterday"? Listen to this computer version:

Yesterday, All those backups seemed a waste of pay.
Now my database has gone away. Oh I believe in yesterday.
Suddenly, There's not half the files there used to be,
And there's a millstone hanging over me. The system crashed so suddenly.
I pushed something wrong. What it was I could not say.
Now all my data's gone and I long for yesterday-ay-ay-ay.
Yesterday, The need for back-ups seemed so far away.
I knew my data was all here to stay, now I believe in yesterday.

"Reboot"

The more I work and wrestle with computers and computer software, I've come to appreciate how that new technology really provides a helpful way to look at the what the path of Jesus is all about. For instance, the term "boot the computer," or "reboot the computer." The term is derived from the actual phrase, "bootstrapping" the computer, which is a technique for loading the first program instructions that enable the computer to continue to load the rest of the programs and system check-ups that are necessary for running the computer. The computer gets itself going by pulling itself up by the bootstraps. To reboot is to start that process over again because there is a problem or error going on in the computer.

The Gospels all depict Jesus beginning his ministry saying "Repent! The kingdom of God is at hand!" If he had come today, he might say, "Reboot! You are about to commit a fatal error that will cause your life system to crash!" We start on the Jesus Path when we recognize that the

path we are on is not working, or is perhaps even dangerous or perilous to our health, and the health of the world. In computer talk: our life is giving us “error messages” and it is time to disconnect from a dysfunctional system, purge our operating system of the old and download a new Operating System. Time to “reboot.”

Rebooting begins by telling the truth about ourselves or the world around us to ourselves and others: The Life-System in whose grip we find ourselves is destroying us, the people around us, and even the planet on which we live. We need a new Life Operating System. Jesus says, “I have just what you need. Come, follow me. I’ll show it to you.”

The thing about this new Life Operating System of Jesus is that it is a full package deal. All the pieces in this package are designed to work together, and the new Life Operating System doesn’t work unless all the pieces are brought together and put into play. So, let’s put together the pieces to get the full picture of the Path.

Jesus starts his ministry saying “Move into the Bigger Mind that God has made possible for you.” Living in the Bigger Mind of God is called the Kingdom or Realm of God. Viewing the world from this Bigger Mind stirs up compassion for others, Bigger Heart, who are suffering or struggling in life. This compassion is rooted in love and the realization we are all interconnected (“members one of another”), or Bigger World. This interconnected compassion and love requires action to engage the sources and causes of suffering and struggle, which is Bigger Life. These are the basic pieces of the Path.

Piece # 1: “Bigger Mind”

In order to move into this Bigger Mind way of being, there is unlearning to be done, and psychological and emotional healing to be affected. The after-effects of trauma, abuse, tragedy, terror, have to be addressed.

There is spiritual healing to be affected as well. Harmful and abusive religious teachings need to be unlearned and repudiated. People need to be anointed with forgiveness and the absolute unmitigated grace of God.

There is also a lot of harmful and bad and downright wrong theology to be abandoned and resisted. Jesus' Path is revolutionary in itself, but early on, so-called followers of Jesus rebelled against the Jesus Revolution, and have infected Christianity with things that actually block and work against the transformative power of the Jesus Path. Let me be clear: Christianity as it is today and has been for centuries is not the Path of Jesus.

Christianity may claim to aspire to that Path, that Way, but it desperately falls short. G.K. Chesterton is quoted as saying, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried." Shockingly, the Path of Jesus is non-dogmatic. He only asked of people to believe in themselves, or have confidence that healing and wholeness could happen within them.

Piece # 2: "Bigger Heart"

How does this relate to Love? He came to show us the full reality of Love, the Love that holds all things together. This is what the "*divine aspect of ourselves*" is. It is ultimately realized and expressed as Love.

But it isn't easy to act and live from this divine center of love. There are human tendencies to act according to our own interests at the expense of others or of the world around us. We fall short of acting according to our divine center. This is called sin. Life also throws things at us that cover over that divine light of love at our center. Jesus says to let our light shine – but it is not easy, because we need to peel away the accretions of life.

This is the work of forgiveness, of confession (=telling it like it is), of being honest with ourselves about ourselves, and of changing direction. The decision to move from small mind to big mind initiates the change. But this change cannot happen at the level of ideas and opinions. It has to be lived in the body.

So, Jesus sends his first followers out into the world, two by two. The Path of Jesus has to be walked. And walking the Path actually changes us. It puts us into contact with people we might not ordinarily come in contact

with, which helps to expand our minds and increase our compassion. But it also enlarges our world.

“Bigger World”

Rev. Sue Owen tells the story about a mission trip she was on with her youth group down to Central America. At the end of their week working in this village setting up a clean water system, the village gathered to thank them and send them home. They had the youth group line up, and the villagers one began singing songs to them as they went up and placed their hands on the faces of each young person, looking into their eyes, and singing a song in Spanish, wishing God’s blessing on them. Sue said she looked at the young people looking into the eyes of these people, and she saw the big High School football players with tears streaming down their faces. Their world had just gotten bigger. Their hearts had gotten bigger. And their lives were bigger.

“Bigger Life”

Jesus came to show us the *divine aspect of ourselves*, and to show us how to access and achieve it. This is the *Fulfilled-Life-in-Abundance* he proclaimed [John 10:10]. How does this relate to Love? He came to show us the full reality of Love, the Love that holds all things together. This is what the “*divine aspect of ourselves*” is. It is ultimately realized and expressed as Love.

But it isn’t easy to act and live from this divine center of love. There are human tendencies to act according to our own interests at the expense of others or of the world around us. We fall short of acting according to our divine center. This is called sin. Life also throws things at us that cover over that divine light of love at our center. Jesus says to let our light shine – but it is not easy, because we need to peel away the accretions of life.

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Our world needs this new Life Operating System that Jesus offers. Let’s not keep it to ourselves. Go out and give it away. It’s a free download.

