

Sermon August 3, 2025

Children's Time

Salt and Pepper

Other things that go together

Wednesday was friendship day

What makes a good friend

Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Broken Hearted God

Sometimes are light with joy, but this week the summer air has been heavy, not just with the humidity, but also with grief and loss. In unexpected ways this week, I have encountered too many people carrying burdens that seem, suddenly too heavy to bear. Not just here— but everywhere I go. A close friend's husband had emergency surgery... bullets raining down in places like Manhattan and Reno... thousands dying of starvation in Gaza. Wounds that

have not healed and are suddenly ripped back open and the pain is as raw and horrible as it was in the beginning.

When I look at all you, I see some of the griefs you carry... stories I already know and those I haven't heard yet.

Each year at my family reunion in California, I stay with my cousin Tom and his family. Tom is younger than me, so he wasn't one of the cousins I spent my time with as a child. He was a goofy little boy who was constantly getting into trouble. This year, his brothers regaled me with stories of "Tom the Troublemaker." The crazy things he did as a teenager... the grey hairs he gave his parents. But whenever people tell stories about Tom, there's always a moment of profound grief. A week after graduating from high school. He and his brother were in a car accident. Joe broke his leg, but Tom broke his back. He never walked again.

Joe told me that when he woke up in the hospital and found out what happened, he started to cry and said "I'm just a head! He thought his life was over before it ever began.

I still remember when my Uncle Pat called all of us to tell us that Tom picked up a chip. Slowly he regained movement in his arms and upper body. Every victory was celebrated. The greatest victory was when he married his high school sweetheart. Darlene never gave up on him... never let him give up on life. They have not always had an easy journey, but they persevered.

Before she died, his mother (my Aunt Marilyn) told me how her heart broke when she got the call about the accident. How she prayed for the strength she needed to help her youngest child at his lowest point.

"I'm just a head, he said, but his mother's broken-hearted love surrounded him. He learned – we all learned – that life goes on, even in the midst of tragedy. God has plans for us that we can barely imagine.

Today we hear from a broken-hearted God, who understands our pain: "When Israel was a child," God says through the prophet, and I loved him." But like so many wayward children, Israel did not appreciate the love given to them and they turned away. They forgot the promises made... they turned to other gods... they drifted farther and farther away. So far away that they left themselves vulnerable to attack by an enemy nation and years of Exile. No matter what God did... no matter what God said... nothing seemed to change things back to who they were supposed to be. Broken-hearted and alone – God missed God's own children and longed to reconnect with them.

And isn't that the story of our faith? Over and over again, the people of God are saved by God only to forget and turn away, looking for something better... a new a cheaper fix. But God, brokenhearted and grieving, never gives up... always forgives and finds a way to try again: "How can I give you up?" God asks today, "I will not destroy you... I am God, no mortal, the Holy One in your midst."

God wants to be with us... God longs for us... God loves us.

And in Jesus, God chooses to be one of us. Even with a broken heart, God decided to come to us and enter into our broken world.

Today, God-in-Jesus looks at brothers fighting over their inheritance and encounters them in their brokenness. "You can fight over money," he tells them. "You can build bigger barns to store your stuff in," he tells them, "but when your time comes, you can't take your money or your grain or your property with you." In the end, all you really have is your relationships... the love you have shared with one another and with your God.

Reconnecting these loving relationships is what is most important to God, and God wants it to be most important to us too. To go to the most broken places in our lives and in our world and be a healing and loving presence.

We meet this God in the Shepherd who leaves his large flock to find the one lost and frightened little sheep. We meet this God again in the parable of the

Prodigal son, when Jesus tells the story of a father who watched his son walk away with his inheritance and squander it in a distant land. This father waits patiently for his child to experience the consequences of his actions and return, and "While he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion." The same compassion that melted the anger of the Holy One in Hosea is described by Jesus as the heart of God for each wayward child. Anger melts in the face of love and the longing of our hearts is fulfilled as we are welcomed home.

Each wayward child...each lost sheep... breaks the heart of God. God wants us to come home, to be at home with ourselves and with one another. Anger and revenge are never God's ultimate goal; and if that is true, they should never be ours. We may rage in anger at betrayal, but beneath the anger is loss and the deep desire to be made whole... for relationships to be restored. We long to return to a home and community that loves each one into living the life we were meant to live. And that is also the longing at the heart of God.

God chooses to be with us in our brokenness. God chooses to be with parents as they learn to live a life without their children in it. God chooses to be with the children sleeping on concrete floors in cages. God chooses to live with families living in rat infested apartment buildings owned by wealthy slumlords. God chooses to bleed with those shot in Gaza and in the places where buckets rain down and people are swept away. God chooses to stand in line with homeless veterans as they wait for a cup of soup and a smile. God chooses to be with each of you... meeting you where you are today.

God chooses to be any place where any person a group of people are broken and in need of a healing presence. And God sends us out to do the same. Amen.

Invitation

One: Come to the table!

Jesus invites you here as part of the people of God.

Come to the table,

not because you have earned a place here,
but because you need mercy and help.
Come because you love God, and want to love God more.
Come because Jesus first loved us, and gave himself for us.
Come because you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
Come because you want to experience the mystery of God's grace.

The Story

One: On the night he was handed over,
Jesus had a meal with his friends.
He took a loaf of bread
and after giving thanks to God,
he broke it and gave it to his disciples.

**Many: He said, "Take, eat;
this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."**

One: After supper Jesus took the cup of wine;
and after giving thanks,
gave it to them and said,

**Many: "Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant
which is shed for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it, remember me."**

One: Let us pray:

**All: God our Creator,
thank you for the gift of your son Jesus Christ,
whose love pursues us our whole life long.
Thank you, Jesus, for giving your life to us in word and deed,
even unto death, even death on a cross.
Come Holy Spirit, feed us with your love
that we may be filled with power
to love God with all our hearts and souls and minds. Amen.**

The Meal is Shared

Prayer of Thanksgiving

**All: We have come to the Lord's table,
we have eaten the bread of heaven.
God is the one who will transform us
so that we can see with Jesus' eyes,
hear with Jesus' ears, speak with Jesus' mouth;
so that we can be the body of Christ in the world,
proclaiming the good news of God's reign.
Come Lord Jesus! Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

May God's kingdom come.
May God's will be done.
Through us.
In us.
In our communities
As we go
On earth. Amen