

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

The Story That Cannot Be Held

Sermon Reflection Notes

This week we explored the idea of being “off kilter”. Rev. Schuermann told the story of his son shadowing the local general practitioner who started each patient visit with the question: “So...you’ns outa kilter?” It’s a quaint phrase, but we know what it means. We seek help when we feel this way, sometimes in the doctor’s office, often in communities of faith.

The world is full of noise, demanding our attention and energy, and we often end up listening to the wrong things without even realizing it. In these moments, Jesus’s voice reminds us, just as it reminded Simon Peter, with the question: “Do you love me more than these?”

The question isn’t meant to shame or blame, but instead, to remind us to refocus. To find our balance again in our relationship with God and with living as a follower of Christ. Jesus gives us the answer we need: Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep.

God is always working: light after darkness, strength after weakness, crown after cross. Sweet after bitter, hope after fears. Home after wandering, praise after tears. Alpha and Omega, beginning and the end. He is making all things new. Springs of living water, shall wash away each tear. He is making all things new. (*All Things New* Elaine Hagenberg) *All things...you and me, the church, the world. God’s story is a story that cannot be held; it is bigger than us, than what we can comprehend. God is making all things new.*

Scripture

John 21:15-25 (NRSVUE)

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” ¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Discussion Questions

1. The doctor in Rev. Schuermann's sermon began his consults with a question: "You'ns outa kilter?" Why would he ask that? What information is being sought?
2. Rev. Schuermann suggested we come to church because we are out of kilter. "Out of kilter" is the business of the church. What role does the church play in helping people who feel "out of kilter"?
3. Approximately one-fifth of the Gospel of John is devoted exclusively to Jesus's words about the future of the faith community. What was the early church facing? What kinds of things would John have been concerned about?
4. The United Methodist Church is currently holding General Conference. They have met for a week already and will continue to meet through next week. What kind of "future of the church" questions are being addressed there?
5. Jesus spoke in a lot of parables that can be confusing. But he also said some very straightforward things about "being the church": Go tell my story, take the Holy Spirit with you, forgive (again and again), and now—Tend my sheep. They are fairly simple instructions, so what trips us up over and over again?
6. At Manchester UMC we've been a bit "off kilter" lately. How do we continue to find our balance again?

Closing Prayer

Holy and grace filled God, we come to this time knowing that we are a little "out of kilter" – some of us a lot and some of us not so much for now. We have been invited to pay attention to the voices that fill our heads. Some voices invite us to hope and some voices invite us to be fearful. But in the midst of the many voices, we also know about this story that invites us to follow the voice of your Son, the risen Christ. It is a voice that summons us to trust your abiding presence and your promises to us. It is a voice that summons us to give ourselves away in service to those who do not have enough. Give us good ears, O God. Give us the grace and courage to listen, to answer, to care, and to rejoice that we may be more fully your Easter people. We pray in the name of Jesus, who gave his life so that we might know new life. Amen.

Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep.