

Pastor Jamie's Sermon

Good Shepherd Church, June 30, 2024
"The Joy of Being Seen"

Young at Heart Message

I'd like to start today's message with an opportunity for storytelling.

The last time I had us take time to share stories and talk with one another, you all seemed to find that helpful and enjoyable so I thought we would try it again today.

I would like us to take 10 minutes to get together in groups of 4-5 people and be in conversation with each other.

The topic I would like you to discuss is this:

Name a person or people at Good Shepherd Church who made you feel welcome, cared for, or seen, and share what they did or said to make you feel that way.

If you are new here or visiting, or do not wish to share, it is OK to just listen to the other stories.

Make sure to give everyone who wishes to share a chance to do so.

By a show of hands, how many of you shared a story about another member of the church?

How many shared a story about a pastor of the church?

I would be shocked if the majority of you had shared a story about a pastor being that person who made you feel welcome, cared for, or seen.

The reason isn't because pastors are inherently unfriendly or unwelcoming, of course.

The reason is because pastors come and go throughout the life of a church, but the church members are the ones who do so much of the work to care for one another over the course of years.

It is a stark reminder for all of us that what makes this church special, and what welcomes people here is all of you.

It is, in my opinion, the beauty of the church as a whole and the value of being part of a church community.

There is joy in being seen not just by church leadership, but by those familiar faces of “the crowd.”

Which is exactly what Jesus does for the bleeding woman who touches his clothes.

The Message

In today’s passage from the Gospel of Mark, we heard two stories: a story of healing, and a story of resurrection.

I want to talk about the story of the healing of the bleeding woman.

More specifically, I want to talk about the significance for this woman not just of being healed, but of being seen.

The passage tells us that this unnamed woman has been bleeding and in pain for 12 years.

It doesn’t tell us the cause of the bleeding, but it is a fair assumption that it likely has to do with a menstrual disorder or a pregnancy-related injury.

If this is indeed her injury, it likely makes her infertile.

Therefore, based on the ancient understandings of anatomy, menstruation, and ritual purity, her womb is no longer a source of life.

This is likely a cause for shame in her culture, and therefore, this woman has likely been cast aside by society.

Alternatively, she may have placed herself on the sidelines, out of sight and out of mind, if she held onto feelings of shame around her condition.

So, when she approaches Jesus to try to receive healing, she does so while trying not to be seen or noticed. She hopes to simply touch Jesus, receive healing, and fade back into the crowd.

But, what actually happens is that she is immediately cured, *and* Jesus notices her.

More accurately, he feels the energy she takes from him for her healing, and he turns to find out who touched his clothes.

Trembling with fear, she kneels before him to admit that it was her who touched him.

Jesus does not punish her as she fears he would. Instead, he tells her that she has been healed.

He publicly commends her faith and even goes so far as to call her “daughter.”

She enters the scene alone, in fear and in secrecy.

She departs the scene having been dignified and praised by Jesus, all while her neighbours witness.

This woman, who has most likely been cast aside for 12 years due to her ailment, now experiences the joy of being seen.

This passage is a good example of the need that humans have to be loved, cared for, and acknowledged.

And our storytelling earlier is a good example of the ways that churches and communities can provide that care and love and acknowledgement.

Many people walk into churches feeling like the bleeding woman.

Perhaps they are not literally bleeding, but many people enter churches with a feeling of brokenness – seeking something beyond themselves.

Many people desire to be seen – not necessarily in the limelight, but on a human level.

People want to be cared for, loved, noticed, and welcomed.

Through their uncertainty, their pain, and their brokenness, people simply want to be seen for who they truly are.

Jesus gives this woman so much more than physical healing – he gives her emotional and spiritual healing as well.

He creates an opportunity to demonstrate for the crowd “holistic healing” – he shows them what it looks like not just to heal her ailment, but to fulfill a basic human need that everyone has - to be seen and cared for beyond our physical bodies.

Jesus extends his love beyond what this woman ever expected.

And, many of the stories you all shared earlier have done something similar.

You have given each other that deep sense of holistic healing in the form of welcome, noticing, and acknowledgement.

You have loved and accepted one another, despite uncertainty, fear, pain, brokenness, or any other insecurities you may have had walking into a new church.

So, as we remember the story of the bleeding woman, may we also remember that while Jesus provides healing in many ways, we can provide similar healing to others, as well.

By seeing one another for who we are and loving each other, remembering the final words of the Moravian Motto - "In all things, love," we can do for others what Jesus did for this woman.

The Good News of today's message is this: You are loved. You are cared for. You are seen.

And, together, we are love. Amen.

Let us pray:

Creator God, we are so grateful that you sent your son Jesus Christ to show us how to love and care for others around us. We pray that you would continue to help us live our lives by the mantra "In all things, Love." We are grateful for this church community that has been so welcoming and loving, allowing us to be seen for who we truly are, living into our true selves as you created us to be. In your holy name we pray. Amen.