

Inefficient, Merciful God Seeks Fully Active Partner to Transform the World

May 21, 2017

You made it!

After all of the preparations, after staying here at church until almost 1:00 o'clock every Sunday afternoon all year long, after making your beautiful candles to symbolize your faith, after wondering and questioning – we're here. So breathe in . . . and out. Yes, Holy Spirit, bring us peace indeed.

Let us pray. Good and gracious God, we thank you. We thank you for the word made flesh that dwells among us, and we thank you for inspiring us to follow you. May the written word and the spoken word help us to find that true and everlasting word which will transform our hearts and shape our lives. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Our Confirmands are here. As I was trying to think of how to inspire the four of you today, it was really difficult because you are so inspirational. Congregation, you're going to need Kleenex when you listen to these faith statements. They are truly, truly amazing.

But, as I was trying to think of how to inspire you today, what word God needs you to have, I was also working on helping one of my cousins work on her online dating profile. And so it occurred to me that what might inspire you would be God's online dating profile: what God might say if God was looking for a partner. You see, there are really three steps in an online dating profile: 1) You say a little something about yourself, 2) You say something about who you're looking for, 3) And then you say something about what you want to do together. And so my title today is "Inefficient Merciful God Seeks Fully Alive Partner to Transform the World."

Inefficient, merciful God. One of the things that we talked a lot about in our Confirmation class is who God is and what God is about. And one of the things that we stressed was that our God is noncoercive. Our God doesn't make you do anything. Our God inspires, cajoles, is in relationship with you, but our God is very, very inefficient.

Our God does not walk straight lines – God has circuitous paths – and that's going to be important because your lives are not going to walk one straight, narrow path. There are going to be bumps, and twists, and turns. There are things that are going to happen in your lives that you have no idea of right now, things that you can't even imagine. All of the adults in the congregation can agree with that one: that life is going to be very different than you kids imagine right now and that inefficient God is going to be with you for it. God doesn't say, only if you walk this straight line, only if you walk this path. Our God is there with you and is inviting you into a life of tremendous, tremendous, profound meaning and purpose.

Inefficient, merciful God – that's another important piece – that our God is about compassion, and about forgiveness, and about reconciling, and healing. No matter if you stray or whatever comes up in your life, our God is there with you and for you, and the things that are important to God are your wholeness, your healing, your fullness of being.

So that's who our God is. If I had to sum it up in two words: inefficient, merciful. And so what is God looking for in you? He wants you to be fully alive. What God wants for you is to find what it is that makes your heart sing and to latch onto it and to do it with purpose and vigor.

There's a wonderful African American theologian named Howard Thurman who, when he talks about vocation, says: "Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it, because what the world needs is people who have come alive." Find your passion, whether it's lawyering, or politics as Kaia is interested in, or perhaps theology, or music, or acting, whatever it is that makes your heart sing, do it for the glory of God and you will be the partner who God created you to be.

Last, what does our God want to do with you? See this isn't just about what you can get. It's also about who you and God can be together. And so in that, the last part of God's profile is to transform the world.

If I have one charge for the four of you today, it is to always make sure that there is something in your life that is focused on others, that there's something in your life that isn't solely for your own benefit. Make sure that there is something in your life, whether it's volunteering by helping someone at the literacy center, or the elderly person up the street to make sure that they have a good and robust life, or giving yourself to working in the church or a career that helps other people, make sure that there is something in your life that is not just for your benefit, because our God is not just thrilled that you are confirming your faith today. Our God is commissioning you. Our God has a mission for you and that is that by virtue of your lives, the kingdom of God will be more present in the world. And let me tell you, congregation, with these four I have every expectation that that is true. They are our church – not the church of the future – they are the church of today. And they are helping God to be more present in the world. And to that we say, Alleluia and Amen.

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Galatians 5:13-15, 22-23a
1 Corinthians 12:4-22
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