

Messaging a New Way of Leadership - UMW Assembly - MARK (Slides 1-12)

(Slide 13) Back in the mid 2000s, Bill Keane, a much loved cartoonist, created a column that was meant to capture the Globalized nature of our world.

I'm sure it was a strip that caused many to chuckle, with Billy proclaiming at the end of the strip ... "You're looking at a meeting of the United Nations!"

And, I suspect that the cartoon, meant to bring a bit of joy in people's lives, probably assumed by the vast majority of people to be quite neutral in its intent and certainly could not be construed as having anything to say about the relationships of power, greed, exploitation, or death ...

And most assuredly, this beloved comic strip which often showed the family at worship, the children saying prayers at bed time, or the actions of familial love and support, would be seen by most as offering up a message that was fully congruent with the life, love, and justice of Jesus Christ

Except that of course, in naming the economic connections on Billy's shirt, and naming them as neutral, Mr. Keane, unintentionally I hope, made a statement that was largely inconsistent with standard of economic and social justice that is woven throughout the whole of scripture.

(Slide 14) For as historian Howard Zinn, once wrote,

"In a world where justice is mal-distributed there is no such thing as a neutral or representative recapitulation of the facts." I agree. Jesus and the prophets of old whom he often quoted, certainly did not see the world from such a point of neutrality, and clearly named their reality. As followers of Jesus, we should do no less.

For a vast portion of the earth, the realities that we face are grim.

Workers around the world are being exploited ...

the sweat of the poorest among us is driving increased stock prices for the wealthy few.

Our waters are being polluted and our air is being poisoned.

Our earth is being warmed at an ever-increasing rate where we are only now beginning to feel the results of what may well be irreparable destruction to vast ecosystems and possibly to the whole of the earth.

More and more public space is becoming privatized where basic resource that once belonged to the community is being commoditized and then used in ways which offer little or no benefit to the community ... such basic things as water and land.

And at the heart of it all is a spiritual deadness that seeks to fill the void with ever more consumption and a pursuit to find spiritual meaning in physical things.

This is a reality wholly inconsistent from that place we pray about each week, "On earth as it is in heaven."

(Slide 15) Fortunately, as United Methodists, in our better moments, we remember this and proclaim in our Social Principles that: we are called to support the poor and challenge the rich and to seek to create systems that bring about that life that Jesus talked about when he said, "I have come that they may have life and have it how? Abundantly!"

(Slide 16) We also note that the debilitating impact of our global reality falls most heavily and harshly on the most vulnerable among us ... our children.

As we note in our current book of Resolutions.

This is who we claim to be as a people, from the time of John Wesley until this.
When we have followed Jesus most closely, we have realized that
in order to fully love God, we are forever called to love our neighbor.

However, sadly, we are living in a world far from this reality,
And if we are honest, we must admit that many of us good United
Methodists are being formed much more readily the worldly cultures that
surround us than we are by the formation of our faith.

I think Pope Francis well captured this truth in a recent proclamation when he in
part said,

Divisions, which are sometimes quite deep, continue to exist within our
human family.

On the global level we see a scandalous gap between the opulence of
the wealthy and the utter destitution of the poor.

Often we need only walk the streets of a city to see the contrast
between people living on the street and the brilliant lights of the
store windows.

We have become so accustomed to these things that they no
longer unsettle us.

Our world suffers from many forms of exclusion,
marginalization and poverty, to say nothing of conflicts
born of a combination of economic, political, ideological,
and, sadly, even religious motives.

(Slide 17) So, let's take a check on this in this room? Please turn to your neighbor
and discuss the following questions:

**Where in your environment do you see disparities between over-
abundance and the marginalized? Which group are you?
Are there possibilities for connecting these worlds in your context?**

(Slide 18) As a United Methodist people who state in our church polity that we are to support the poor and challenge the rich,
As a United Methodist people who make resolutions regarding our claim and concern for the vulnerability of children,
and as Believers in the Way of Christ who claim to follow a Lord who said he is found in "the least of these,"

we desperately need to empower and animate leadership who are committed to create, as Pope Francis eloquently noted, "a culture of encounter."

Encountering one another across our many divisions,
encountering the Christ who dwells within the margins,
encountering the systems of violence and oppression,
and encountering our own reluctance to the gospel's invitation to the cross,
and encountering and enacting economic practices that reflect the will of God.

In order to create such a culture of encounter, I think we will need to tend to three primary points of movement. The first goes like this:

I have a friend, Hugh Hollowell, who directs a ministry for impoverished and marginalized peoples in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Hugh is a Mennonite street pastor who is often known for saying it the way he sees it.

It's a bad habit and gets him disinvited from a lot of the more respectable religious gigs. I guess prophets are like that.

One thing Hugh is oft to say to good cleaned-up church folks is this:

Homelessness is not usually caused by someone's moral failings,

It is more usually the result of our churches' relationship failings.

We don't connect our congregational life inside the church with the people outside the church.

If we are to be the disciples of the Jesus,

then we must get out of our walls and connect with the streets.

(Slide 19) Theologian Ched Myers puts it like this:

Faith communities engage when they create connections between our spiritual reflections, the practical life of the local parish, and public issues.

It doesn't take a long read in the gospels to figure out that most of the ministry of Jesus is found out there, out in the world.

You see, Jesus was all about theology on the road.

Yet, for most of us, most of our time is spent, not on the road, but in the sanctuary. I think it is a bit humorous to note that when Jesus goes into the synagogue, it is generally to cause a riot. Just saying.

Thus, if we are to create a culture of encounter, we must connect the seminary, the sanctuary, and the streets.

(Slide 20) Secondly, we must re-encounter our life as a people with a primary story that begins with an Exodus from bondage and then immediately is forced into the desert and to a place of total reliance on God where Sabbath is the operative way of being.

Take a moment with your neighbor and share a bit about what Sabbath means to you?

Sabbath concerns the communal discipline of setting limits, so that we can rightly recognize the Creation as a Gift, instead of as a possession or a commodity.

(Slide 21) This is best articulated in the manna story, a parable about God's provision of what we need to live. The "instructions" of this archetypal tale, are economic; the newly liberated Hebrew slaves are tutored in the old ways of sharing:

(Slide 22) Everyone must gather “enough” and no one must accumulate “too much.” So Sabbath is not an individual spiritual discipline only; it represents a communal practice of constraint within the context of economic sufficiency for all.

(Slide 23) These “instructions” attempt to constrain our Fallen human impulse to work compulsively, to consume addictively, and to use and exploit resources and labor mercilessly.

Sabbath represents a cautionary discipline that seeks to constrain this addiction/compulsion (which the Bible calls Sin).

So the entire tradition of Sabbath-keeping is introduced in scripture even before the laws given to Moses.

Sabbath distribution and limitation are God's instructions, and are specifically social and economic in nature.

This economic notion of Sabbath is codified in the Jubilee Laws of Leviticus and Deuteronomy and then later proclaimed by Jesus when in his inaugural sermon, he proclaims, “I have come to Bring Good News to the poor and to proclaim the year of Jubilee!”

Now, make no mistake, this encounter with the life-giving economic practices of Sabbath is going to be most difficult ...

(Slide 24) For cross the planet, we are more and more becoming a people who are literally consumed by our consumption.

As Matthew Colwell wrote in the excellent little book Sabbath Economics, The message hammered home in the estimated 3000 advertisements the average American sees every day is the assertion that we can fill our social and spiritual emptiness by the purchase and ownership of material goods. The emptiness such consumption leaves behind can lead to yet more consumption in the futile effort to fill the emptiness.

It becomes a cycle of addiction.

And though other places may not feel the brunt of 3000 daily advertisements, even in the most undeveloped nations, advertising is fully prevalent.

The pressure to consume more and more is the ever present pressure among us. The power and principalities of the age create narratives using powerful psychological tools and fueled by billions of dollars. The messages are incredibly persuasive and utterly relentless.

I have some of these powerful stories to share with you.

And indeed, they are stories that mold us and form us in predictable ways. For as all good educators know, the best education, is the education you get when you don't even realize it is happening.

(Show slides 25-30)

(Slide 31) It may seem most almost impossible to push back the power of the God of Opulence ... but it can be done and it is essential for life.

(Slide 32) Speak to an older wiser story that has the power to supplant other dominant narratives.

That has the power to transform our reality.

Must read the story anew and allow it to speak from its context into our context.

(Slide 33-39)

(Slide 40) Discover the reality in its place.

Dream of the ways that reality overlays our reality.

Design new ways of being.

Live into a resurrection destiny - the new life of Jesus which is the prophetic life of justice, love, and forgiveness.

(Remainder of Slides with Animation 41-50)

Mark 5:21 - 43 - A Story of Radical Hospitality

21 When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea.

22 Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live."

24 So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.

25 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years.

26 She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse.

27 She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." 29 Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

30 Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" 31 And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" 32 He looked all around to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.

34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

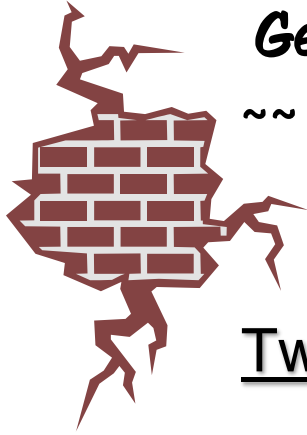
35 While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" 36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." 37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.

38 When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." 40 And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was.

41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!"

42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement.

43 He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.



Getting into the Way of Jesus

~~ moving beyond the walls ~~

Considering our Outreach ...

Two Perspectives – Mark 5:21-43

- Gettin' there with the "son of man"

- Oh, oh ... he done
broke the law



What do you note about the structure of the story?

Here is the structure of the story ... Jesus encountering Jairus and returns to the woman and then returns to Jairus. Intercollation

Where is the setting of the story ... and who are the primary characters?

Jairus
the crowd
the disciples
the woman
Jairus's daughter - little girl

Coming back from the other side ... Gerasenes

Significance here ... coming back from being with The Other ... the gentiles

So how does the story begin?

In the crowd ... with the leader of the synagogue approaching him

What significance does it have to be a leader of the synagogue?

Spiritual leader ... understands the law

Represents "the nation" ... those who are on top

Why does he come? What does that mean?

Daughter at the point of death

Desperate ... has no other options

The old story does not work ... even for the elite

Need to begin thinking about who these folks are ... respectfully ...

head of the household, man, Jewish leader, he has a name Jairus. He approaches Jesus directly. Comes up and asks him what he wants. In an honor culture ... when you go into a chief's hut, you go in and sit at the door. You don't walk straight, you walk bent so that you are not higher than the chief.

Jairus is giving a grant of honor ... bowing down to say I'm acknowledging that you have something that I need. It is the meeting of male equals.

They depart and what does the crowd do?

Immediately, we see a switch in the focus of the action, who becomes the focus?

What has happened to her? How do you think she might look?

The woman ... she is with blood, menstruating and has been for 12 years

She is impoverished

She has been exploited ... physicians had taken everything

Anemic ... rags

Contrasts ... has no name ... homeless as far as we can tell ... bent over in pain and not out of protocol. Mark gives us the illiterates ... sick, unclean, and poor. She is sick because she is poor and she is poor because she is sick. **Have you ever seen this?**

What did she do?

Came up behind Jesus and touches him

Forces her way through the crowd

What do you think might be the response of the crowd? Why? Is there anything scandalous here?

Furious ... this woman with blood has come into the midst

To be with blood is to destruct the whole of the religious project ... disrupt the whole of the community (Lev 15:25-31)

"If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, but not at the time of her monthly period, or has a discharge that continues beyond the time of her period, she is unclean the same as during the time of her period. Every bed on which she lies during the time of the discharge and everything on which she sits becomes unclean the same as in her monthly period. Anyone who touches these things becomes unclean and must wash his clothes and bathe in water; he remains unclean until evening. "When she is cleansed from her discharge, she is to count off seven days; then she is clean. On the eighth day she is to take two doves and two pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. The priest will offer one for an Absolution-Offering and the other for a Whole-Burnt-Offering. The priest will make atonement for her in the presence of GOD because of the discharge that made her unclean. "You are responsible for keeping the People of Israel separate from that which makes them ritually unclean, lest they die in their unclean condition by defiling my Dwelling which is among them. (Lev 15:25-31)

They are made unclean ... Jesus is made unclean ... the Jewish temple leader is made unclean ... AND YET Mark focuses on this one who is unclean and exploited over and above Jairus and his daughter

Contrast the woman's approach to Jesus and that of Jairus?

Woman comes from behind ... does not go through the formalities

Approaches anonymously ... seeking a covert touch

Jairus approaches with proper deference ... from the front and bows

Jairus talks directly to Jesus, she speaks only to herself

Jairus is named and a leader (approved)

Head of his family and his social group

She is nameless and alone and a woman and with blood

Jairus requests ... she takes

Mark is portraying members from the ends of the social spectrum

the one who is in and the one who is out

respectability and socially unacceptable

What happens when she touches Jesus?

She is healed

The power flows out of Jesus and into her

The status of Jesus is drained so that her status might be raised

The social spectrum begins to be turned on its head

What does Jesus do and what affect does this have on the scene?

Jesus stops and inquires what is going on

Causes a struggle between the disciples and Jesus

What might be the response of the disciples? Why?

Perhaps they wish to continue forward

They ignore the crowd ... the woman

Fail to be aware that this brokenness was in the midst

Do not have the eyes to see transformation

Refuse to see the reality because they fail to be intentional to seek reality

Jesus seeks to see the face of the poor

So what then does the woman do? What does this do to Jairus? What does it do to the their road trip on mission?

Comes and falls before Jesus in fear and tells him the whole of the story

Jairus is advocating for his daughter, the woman has no one to advocate for her.

Do you notice how poor folk talk to themselves?

What might that story sound like?

Might take great issue with the purity code ... maybe not

Poor internalize all the horrible things said about them

Same for gay folks, same for African-Americans, same for

any marginalized, shut out, and shut up community

What is Jesus' response, why is this scandalous, and what does that bring about?

He stops, gives her space and listens ... for a teacher, a healer, to stop and give space to this woman is absolutely outside of all of the laws

Jairus is forced from stage center.

The woman takes on the point of priority.

The woman now is given her voice

***** Jesus says to the woman that her faith has made her well, faith in what?**

Faith that the radical love of Jesus would not diminish or demean her. Faith that where the community had completely rejected her, Jesus would not. Faith that she was not the abhorrent person that everyone claimed her to be. Faith in radical love that always reaches out.

***** How does Jesus allow the people to finally see the woman? How does the woman allow the people to finally see Jesus?**

She can only be seen rightly through the eyes of love. He can only be seen rightly from the eyes of the very bottom, the ones who are MOST outside.

What might be an analogy for today?

What does Jesus call her and what does that do? What makes her well? What does this mean?

Calls her daughter ... gives her rightful place in the community
Absolute obliteration of the purity codes and the debt codes

What might be the response of Jairus? The disciples?

Jairus' daughter is dying and they have been stopped for care for this cartoon
Jesus gives her status that even his disciples do not have ...
Mark 4:40 ... Why are you afraid ... do you have no faith?

The scene then shifts again ... how? What is the response of Jesus and what is the significance of this particularly in terms of what has just occurred?

Jesus rejects this version of the truth ... the truth as being interpreted by the points of power ... by those who cannot see an alternative vision

How might this be interpreted today? Where are the points of power in our realm that might not be able to see alternative visions?

The encourages the temple leader to believe when this poor woman with blood had just believed. Shocking! Scandalous! What does this mean???!?

When they arrive at Jairus' house, what do they find?

Mourning ... disbelief ... they say the girl is dead

What is Jesus' response? What does this suggest?

Nope ... she's sleeping ... their lack of faith

Do you remember another story about folks where were sleeping?

Disciples in Gasemene ... in the garden

Ends the story with give the girl something to eat ... prophetic tradition ... Mark wants you to know that this flows out of the story of Elisha ... (2 Kings 4:32-36)

Elisha entered the house and found the boy stretched out on the bed dead. He went into the room and locked the door--just the two of them in the room--and prayed to GOD. He then got into bed with the boy and covered him with his body, mouth on mouth, eyes on eyes, hands on hands. As he was stretched out over him like that, the boy's body became warm. Elisha got up and paced back and forth in the room. Then he went back and stretched himself upon the boy again. The boy started sneezing--seven times he sneezed!--and opened his eyes. He called Gehazi and said, "Get the Shunammite woman in here!" He called her and she came in. Elisha said, "Embrace your son!"

(2Ki 4:32-36)

Jesus raises the daughter ... and it is the second time he has touched a dead body.

What is the significance of the girl's age?

Living in luxury ... almost puberty ... vice loss of ability to bear a child living in poverty

Symbology of the 12 tribes of Israel

Within the family... these daughters represent the privileged and the impoverished ... respectability and not

The body of the nation ... the body politic is on the verge of death

What is the significance of the timing of the girl's healing?

Only when the one woman is restored to daughterhood, can the other be.

Powerful political statement

Speaks directly to the point of power

Where are our purity codes?

What you have here is the banker and the bum. It could not be more exaggerated. What connects them. They are both sick. These are the folks whose voice has been silenced through the perception of their unsilence. Purity and cleanliness has largely been defined through race.

Where does the story of the woman become your story?

Who is the hemorrhaging woman in our world today?

What does this mean for our church?

Asked ... what do 50 stars mean and what are the 13 stripes. What are the 12 years of the girl and the 12 years of bleeding. The body politic ... Jesus wants to heal the rich as well, but has to heal the poor first. In the house of the rich, it doesn't feel like they have gotten better. But when the poor is franchised, it seems like things have died ... the girl gets well, wakes up and the whole ... the entire body politic is made whole.

That is the gospel in miniature in the book of Mark.