

First Presbyterian Church
Sunday, Oct. 20, 2019

Sermon Title: Erasing the Lines

Passage: John 8: 1-11.

Matthew 8:1-15

Series Finding Trouble:

- As followers of Christ where is He asking us to go, places to move into.
 - Places perhaps others are not comfortable going to.
 - God is wanting our faith to be stretch, when we step outside of ourselves and move into places where we are dependent on trusting him we will grow. Stepping out of our boats if you will.

There is a statement/line found in the Gospels numerous times that characterizes Jesus' life: "and Jesus crossed over to the other side..."

- Multiply times we see this describing Jesus' movement. His motivation. His mission.

"The other side"

- He was drawn to the "other side", so he crossed over and went there.
- Context:
 - Often in a boat – crossing over to the other side of the sea of Galilee.
 - But Jesus often crossed over cultural, racial and gender barriers in order to get to the other side.
 - John 4: Jesus goes out of his way to meet a woman in Samaria.
 - He often crossed over from a mountain coming down into the valley to get to the other side
- He went where most people didn't want to go, meeting people nobody wanted to meet, and in doing so He found lots of trouble....good trouble.

Jesus loved crossing over to the other side, but this was not a common practice in his day and as we will begin to unpack, I don't believe it is common for us either.

Jesus was a Jew:

- Part of their culture was defining who was in and who is out
 - In with God, out with God.
 - They, the Jews would refer to themselves as Insiders. They would then draw a line identifying those who would be Outsiders. They put themselves on one side of the line and the so called "Outsiders" on the other. (*Use the white board*)

We have gotten good at drawing lines ourselves. Putting ourselves on one side and other people on the other. (*keep using the white board*)

- This line defines: us and them.
- This line: protects us from them.

- This line keeps us separated from others....from other Image bearers.
 - You vote differently than me....line
 - Your values are different than mine.....line
 - We see this a lot with kids....You don't look the same....line
 - We see this a lot with adults....You don't make the same....line
 - You don't live the same....line
 - You worship differently than me....line.
 - As adults we do this with kids: “You crazy, hormone – what are you thinking kids” on one side and us – sane, level headed adults on the other.

We have become so polarized as a society and culture that it has become easy to recognize the differences in others and to just keep the differences at bay.

But Jesus was drawn to the differences in others. Their differences were a part of their story, whether they had anything to do with those differences or not.....a story worth pursuing and learning from. And only in crossing over would he get the opportunity to hear, learn and even share in their story.

This “crossing over to the other side” was not casual traveling, sightseeing – “I wonder who we might meet today?” No – it was purposeful and intentional.

Let's look at a few of these intentional encounters Jesus had.

John 8: Woman Caught in Adultery

- Jesus was teaching and people had gathered to listen.
 - Perhaps this morning he was teaching on grace and truth.
 - If not then, He soon would be.
- Bible teachers and Serious Religious bring in a women.
 - They knew their bible – the Torah and they knew sin.
- To them Jesus was the real problem and they had set this whole thing up to get him in a pickle.
 - Isn't it sad that they went to such lengths, humiliating an already broken woman, willing to let her even die, in order to prove a scriptural point to Jesus?
- The pickle they had planned:
 - If Jesus says, yes – this is what our Bible teaches lets gather our rocks...then where is his compassion and love that had become the main point to his Gospel message.
 - If He says no with the stones, let's love and show compassion, does he disregard the teachings of scripture.
- Their bible did teach that adultery was a punishable act and even worthy of death (Lev. 20:10 and Deut. 22: 22-24) but it was for both parties...where is the man?
- The woman:
 - Broken, ashamed, humiliated, being used – a target, perhaps naked.
 - Her life already a mess. Loneliness with a reputation. The center of attention, a lesson on display.
- Dale Bruner in his Gospel of John commentary says – this whole set-up has an unpleasant odor.
- Jesus stoops down and writes in the ground.

- His movement takes all eyes off of this young woman.
- Now the eyes are on him. A simple move, yet masterful takes the attention off this girl and now is on him.
- For a moment there is relief.
- What does he write (former YL staff) – “Watch this.
 - Nobody knows what he writes, but I have a suggestion that will come later.
- Jesus stands and speaks.
 - If your life is without sin – go ahead start throwing.
 - Jesus knew sin too and does take it very seriously.
 - But he would never use the Bible to beat someone up.
 - But his way of dealing with it was not with rocks, but later would be with wood – the wood of a cross.
 - He stoops again and writes a bit more – (YL friend) suggest he writes – How did I do?
- Now the crowd was in a pickle.
 - Their attention was no longer on the woman, nor Jesus. They now were looking at themselves – a real self-examination.
 - The older ones being wiser, and a full life of sin, knew they had no reason to throw any rocks.
 - And slowly, one by one – they all began to leave, even the Bible teachers and serious Religious (Pharisee).
 - Why did they leave? Jesus doesn’t tell them to leave.
 - In leaving they miss out on hearing the words of Jesus. “Neither do I...you’re still IN!”
- The temple, just minutes before was full of all kinds of people, all kinds of sinners, had now emptied. It was just He and this woman.
 - “Where is everyone?” Jesus asked.
 - “Has no one condemned you?”
 - She looks around and see no-one. The only one standing, who could rightfully condemn chooses not to.
 - Instead he invites her.
 - Invites her into a different life.
 - A life of love, grace, compassion and yet truth.
 - Leave this life your living, leave right now and right here.
 - And although it is not spoken here, we have to believe his invitation was to follow Him.
 - Because EVERYONE was invited.
 - All were IN
 - No one is OUT
- There was a line drawn that day. (*go back to the white board*)
 - A line that separated those IN and those OUT. US and THEM.
 - This line was drawn by the serious bible teachers and followers.
 - We are IN and You are OUT.
- What was Jesus really writing in the dirt when he bent down and took the eyes off this young woman and put them on himself?
 - Here is what I want to belief
 - He wasn’t’ writing, but rather was erasing.

- Erasing the line that had separated the young woman from everyone else.
 - She wasn't on the outside looking in, she was IN – looking in.
 - She like everyone else that day was IN. And the crowd who had walked away in shame of their own sin missed out on hearing that they too were in.
- For Jesus Everyone is IN. everyone had the right to be part of the kingdom. (*white board*)
 - There is no US and Them, only US
 - All are welcome. Not everyone knows they are welcome, but all are welcome.
 - And all throughout his life and ministry he goes out of his way to communicate and show this. This got Jesus into trouble with the religious elite, but again it was worth it, as it is to us.
 - Even our Gospel writers wanted to communicate this fact...this truth.

Matthew's Gospel

- Matthew 50 AD – written for the Jews
- Matthew records the whole sermon on the mountain. (5-7) Matthew places almost all his miracles of Jesus in the following chapters...8 & 9. (10 miracles listed in Matthew)
- It's the first three miracles in chapter 8 that would communicate a message to a Jewish people and culture, there is no US and THEM, INSIDER AND OUTSIDER. His placing these three miracles at the top of the 10 is for a purpose.
- Jewish culture and even religion had an inside and an outside crowd. Those who were seen as insiders were basically men....those on the outside...most everybody else.
 - In the church today we can be tempted with the same thing...placing people on the outside, drawing a line, excluding them from the kingdom, and only running and loving those on the "inside."
- Matthew's attempt in his writing and placing these three miracles at the top is to say...with Jesus there is no outsider.
 - No one is excluded from the kingdom ...ALL are welcomed.
- The Leper – Matt. 8:1-4
 - Leper: Considered unclean before God and within the community. They were believed to be cursed by God. Often referred to as the Living Dead.
 - His Place in the Jewish faith and culture.
 - He Had No Place. Considered Outsider – Cursed
 - Out of all the people in Israel they were the most ostracized.
 - Not allowed in any walled city of Israel and especially the holy city of Jerusalem, which would forbid them from the Temple
 - He approached Jesus and asks – Are you willing.

- Jesus quickly responds – YES, I am so willing.
 - Touches him, restores him and welcomes him.
 - He erases the line. YOU are IN!

The next miracle - The Centurion and his Son/Servant – Matt. 8:5-13

- A centurion was a Roman officer in charge of 100 foot soldiers. Roman army
 - Occupied much of the known world which included Israel.
- His Place:
 - Gentile. Probably a Syrian rather than a Roman. Gentiles were consider unclean as well. Definitely Outsiders.
 - Only a leper was seen as more unclean.
 - They could enter Jerusalem and even the Temple, but only so far – The furthest out courts – “Outer Courts of the Gentiles”
Another line that separate those in and those out.
 - His Request:
 - For His Son/Servant
 - He was a believing non Jew.
 - But instead of making a request he tells his story.
- Jesus’ Response:
 - Impressed with his Faith, heals his son/servant.
 - Again, erases the line. You are welcome. You and your family are IN!

The third miracle recorded in Matthew 8: 14-15

- Jesus would heal a woman. Not just any woman, but a Mother in Law, Peter’s mother in law. If there ever was a line that needed to be drawn it would be between me and my mother-in-law! Just kidding....sort of.
- But what place did women have in this culture?
 - They too were outside looking in.
 - No Value. Step above slaves. Child Barriers.
 - Jewish Man’s Prayer. “I’m grateful that I was not born a woman.
 - They could go to the temple, but only so far. There was a line drawn between the men and the women.
 - There is no request for a healing, but Jesus, sees the need and restores her back to health.
 - The mercy of God often comes without our asking.
 - The line has been erased. She too, even a mother-in-law in IN

There is a reason Matthew places these 3 miracles at the top of his list.

- No one is an outsider to Jesus.
- All are welcomed. All lines are erased. All walls are broken down.
- Everyone is an Image Bearer of God.

Jesus is the great Eraser – (sketch) There is no line that separates. His great work on the cross was the ultimate eliminator of all lines.

What lens do you look through regarding inclusion and diversity? What contributes to that lens? Does the lens you look through move you towards others who are different or away?

We pray a prayer every week as we come and sit in these seats. It is what we call the Lord's Prayer. How does Jesus ask us to start and address His Father...OUR

- He's more than just MY Father, He's OUR Father. He's not just "our" Father (within this body) but He is OUR Father, within this community, on the other side of whatever lines have been drawn.
 - 2 Corinthians 5: 19ff
 - For God was in Christ, reconciling (making right) the world to himself, no longer counting peoples sins against them.
 - The line of sin was dealt with.
 - AND he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors, God is making his appeal through us....
 - In other words, God is asking us to make things right too.
 - Erase the lines we have drawn that puts others on the outside.
 - We are Christ's ambassadors, His messengers. Erase those lines, welcome others. They are already in, but don't know it. Make it known by "crossing over" and erasing the lines that divide.

Let's pray.