

Children's sermon

(And just) like that it's over. I've seen a number of movies that have that kind of sudden end. I've been to a dinner party or two that have had that kind of sudden end. Have you ever had that experience? It's like everything is going grandly....and then, the lights come on, or the music ends, or people make a beeline for the door as not to help with cleaning up. And just like that it's over!

Maybe not as exciting as a good movie, or sweet as a dinner party with friends, the church year will end next Sunday. We have spent the past 11 ½ months (in the) Gospels according to Mark, and some of John. In truth we have witnessed the ministry of Jesus from his baptism to his trial before Pontius Pilate. Along the way, we have heard Jesus teaching of God's very different ways of loving us. That love is given most fully in forgiveness a healing of heart, mind, and in many instances in Mark, healing in body. That forgiveness is what we call (mercy.) Jesus was all about mercy.

(A young) bookkeeper secretly pocketed three thousand dollars of the businesses money. When his action was discovered the young man was ordered to report to the senior president of the company. His heart was heavy, and his face burned with embarrassment as he approached the president's office. He announced himself to the president's aide. (He sat), and waited. He knew this would lead to his losing his position in the firm. He feared the possibility of legal action against him. It felt like his whole world had collapsed because he thought he was so smart. He wasn't. And just like that, it was over.

(The) president asked him about the whole affair. He was asked if the allegations were true. He could not lift his head. He nodded slightly and whispered "yes" through his brimming tears. The president surprisingly asked "If I keep you in your present capacity can I trust you in the future?" The young man lifted his head and replied, "Yes, ma'am, you certainly can. I have learned my lesson."

The president then said, "I'm not going to press charges, and you can continue in your position. I think you need to know, however, that you are the second person in this firm who succumbed to temptation, and was shown leniency. I was the first. What you have done, I did. (The) mercy you are receiving, I received. It is only the grace of God that can keep us both."

Do not hear this story as permission to do unethical things. (Too) many people of the Lutheran persuasion interpret God's mercy as their easy out of faithful life. It is not. The key to mercy is the change of heart of the forgiven. Have you learned your lesson? Yes, I have.

Imagine, for the moment, what was going on in the mind of that young bookkeeper as he waited in the boss's office. (Could) it be that the sun might turn dark, and the moon would cease to shine. Could it be that? Could he imagine the collapse of all he had ever known? Yes. Could it be that he only saw doom and destruction for himself, his family, and his friends? Indeed.

In that moment, our young bookkeeper came face to face with his own apocalypse. Life ...and just like that it's over....

Every year on the Sunday before the "end" we turn to the literature called Apocalyptic writing. (And) while the images of the apocalypse is popular in today's entertainment....think Zombie Apocalypse....the Walking Dead, and Mel Gibson movies.... That isn't apocalyptic. It is a literal interpretation of the apocalypse...(but that) is not what "apocalyptic" means. Apocalyptic means to unveil, to show the workings of.

Imagine the next to the last (scene) in the Wizard of Oz. The four companions stand before that big talking head spouting fire. Bow before the great and powerful Oz. Then, Toto, (pulls) back the curtain revealing the white haired con-man. Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain....I am..... and just like that it is over. The unveiling is the apocalypse....

(When) Jesus' disciples get all enamored by the glitz and glamour of the big buildings of the Temple complex...they were implying the great power of religious institutions and expression. While tradition, rites and rules implied power, Jesus said that power was no power at all. Jesus showed his disciples throughout the Gospels that the (power) of love is the greatest power in the cosmos.

Jesus showed that to the blind, the lepers, and the children. He showed it to the crowds, the hungry, the grieving, and the lone. And that love came freely. There was no pre-condition. There was no sign-here. There was no sell-up's to add benefits. That's not how God's kingdom works.

Could the present (struggles) of our world: polarization, economic disparity, fear of violence, sexism, racism, ageism....be affected if we were to lead with love? How would politics be different if we led with love? How would international diplomacy be affected if love was the common ground?

While I may sound like the idealism (of the) hippies in the golden age of the 1960's....this is simply an echo of the writer of Hebrews....whose people were faced with the military, economic, and cultural oppression of the Roman empire. The writer calls our eyes away from the large talking head, and invites us into the heavenly court where Jesus has mercified us....and then (we are) encouraged to do two things: stir one another to love and good deeds; and continue to meet together, to build community woven in love and faith.

The boss looked at the young bookkeeper....(she) could have done something much more harsh, much more appropriate, much more righteous....or could she? And just like that....it was over.

The young bookkeeper was mercified in the presence of Jesus dressed like the company's president, himself mercified..... years earlier. (And) just like that.....it was over.

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