

Weaving the World Anew

October 17, 2021 at First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC

Lexi Boudreaux

Texts: Mark 10:35-45

I saw a video on Tiktok the other day that made me laugh out loud because it made me think that this would be something my family would do to me. The video starts with a mom gleefully putting on a blow-up shark costume, standing at her daughter's bus stop. As soon as her middle school aged daughter gets off the bus the shark mom starts running towards her and as soon as the daughter sees this she starts running with all her might away from her mom in the shark costume with a look of true horror now chasing her down the road. It was truly a hilarious prank as this happened in front of all the other school children on the bus for peak embarrassment. As I stopped laughing at this video and read our scripture passage for today I couldn't help but wonder if this is what the disciple's experience of Jesus was like. Terrifying and awe-filled. Surprising and perhaps even a little bit embarrassing. A reminder of the love that is there for them and also a reminder that it is a love that they aren't really ready to accept most of the time.

This morning, we enter the narrative of the gospel of Mark directly following Jesus predicting his death and resurrection. Jesus tells the disciples what is in the near future for them all and yet there is immediately a misunderstanding. James and John confidently ask Jesus if they can sit on his right and left hand when he is in glory, eagerly searching for assurance of some kind of victory coming soon. Jesus replies saying, "you do not know what you are asking" at this point, I've wondered if Jesus said this with an eye roll or an exasperated sigh, thinking come on guys I literally just told you what we were all in for.

At that moment, James and John were caught up in the same patterns that the Roman Empire enforced. They expected Jesus to start a revolution that allowed them to replace the current system with

another with them in power instead. They were searching for a promise that they'd achieve something valuable, something quantifiable, something that would give them security and soon. They were looking for a Jesus who would become another king, not a Jesus who would lead them on a path of servitude and ultimately make them witnesses to his death at the hands of the state. This was a new kind of power, a new sort of revolution that instead of more domination and scarcity led to liberation and new life even in the face of death.

Today we have joined new members into our church and have made promises with them to journey on the path of discipleship together. Just like James and John we often do not know what we are getting into when we choose to dive deep into exploring our faith in the midst of community, to figure out together what it means to be the church in a world that often resists communal ways of being in favor of individualism.

Later on, in his exchange with the disciples Jesus says, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers' lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant." Here, Jesus lays out a different model for community that does not involve usual systems of power and ideas of success but is grounded in mutual service and interdependence. Sometimes it is easy for us to see our journey of discipleship or our faith journeys as things that should be measured in a straight line or in some sort of progression, that at some point we should have it all figured out. That to be a part of church means to get things done, tasks accomplished, facts learned, and goals achieved. And while some of this is good in moderation, we have to get some practical things done together in community, I think perhaps when we start thinking this way we are falling into the same trap as James and John.

When we step into church community we are stepping out of the systems of our wider culture that demand measurable outcomes or individual ambition. We explore what it means to serve one

another, to let ourselves be seen and our needs be met, to heal and to be healed in joyful relationship with each other and with God.

Real service requires vulnerability, it requires that we are willing to be messy with each other, it demands from us to trust one another enough to lay our hearts out on the table when the going gets tough. Through this service and vulnerability, we are formed as followers of Jesus, as people who turn others and our own expectations of how things should go upside down, as people who are willing to go into uncharted territory together for the pursuit of mercy, justice, and reconciliation in our lives and in the lives of our neighbors. This way of living in community, accountable to one another and to God is not easy. It's hard work, it's Spirit filled work, and requires us to be willing to let go of what no longer serves us in favor of new ways of seeing the world, new ways of even seeing ourselves, perhaps even new ways of seeing God.

How are we being servants to one another? How are we creating safe spaces to explore our relationships with one another and with God? How are we going out into the world and embodying the movement of the Spirit in our relationships and interactions outside of First Church?

Each of us brings unique gifts and ways of growing to this collective body of Christ. We each have a part in this call to service and transformation, this call for collective liberation that Jesus' life, ministry and yes even his death, beckons us towards.

I see our hearts for service and healing in the thread in my email inbox that comes from the First Church list when someone has a prayer request. Messages of care, empathy and deep concern pour out from across the internet waves. I see it in the cards that we send for people on the pastoral care list. I see it in the ways we interrogate the presence of white supremacy culture in our systems and in our world so that all may feel belonging in this household of God. The beauty of participating in faith community when it comes to working towards liberation, reconciliation, and healing is that no one way is the right way. I've seen activists in the past year posting on the internet this phrase: "Resistance is NOT a one

lane highway. Maybe your lane is protesting, maybe your lane is organizing, maybe your lane is counseling, maybe your lane is art activism, maybe your lane is surviving the day. Do NOT feel guilty for not occupying every lane. We need all of them.” I would add that maybe your lane is choosing to do some inner work that has been buried down deep for too long. That road is quiet, long, and arduous without a clear marker of success in the traditional sense, but brings you into more authentic relationship with yourself, God and neighbor.

All of these are paths where perhaps you realize once you start on it that you had no idea what you were getting yourself into. James and John in our passage this morning certainly realized this once Jesus abruptly confronted them with the realities of what it means to follow him.

When we promise to be in community with one another as members of the body of Christ we promise to walk side by side on this journey that challenges all our previous frameworks of being human together. We commit to messy exploration, vulnerability, and trust in each other and where God is taking us. We promise grace when inevitably we get it wrong sometimes and affirmation of each other’s belovedness even in moments of disagreement. And through it all as we sang in our hymn this morning Restless Weaver, we pray that God may grant us her creative vision and with us weave her world anew. May it be so.

Amen.