



SAINT LUKE'S

“CHILDREN OF HUMANITY”
PROPER 8C

1 KINGS 19:15-16,19-21

PSALM 16

GALATIANS 5:1,13-25

LUKE 9:51-62

A SERMON BY THE REV. CAROLINE STACEY
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Jesus says about himself: *Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.* The Son of Man has no safe place. The Son of Man is homeless. Jesus' most common title for himself is Son of Man. Within his own Hebrew tradition, the Book of Daniel connects the Son of Man to the Ancient of Days, who holds time and eternity and judgment in his hands.¹ Jesus may have understood himself to be a broker not only of the kingdom of God, but of the apocalyptic end-times wrapped around the final coming of that Kingdom.

Yet the Son of Man is also God's bridge with humanity. In Ezekiel, God often addresses the prophet as Son of Man. And so when Jesus speaks of himself as the Son of Man he is positioning himself as our representative. What does Jesus have to say to us this PRIDE Sunday? Which other children of humanity have nowhere to rest their heads? Which communities are on the margins of our world but at the center of God's concern and kingdom? Refugees and immigrants everywhere, the homeless; our LGBTQ youth, the kids and families in our GO tutoring program, victims of domestic violence...Any and all who are not safe even in their own homes.

¹ *Daniel 7:9,13-14,22.*

Today's gospel is life on the road, brief encounters on the way to Jerusalem. And what Jesus says today is: follow me. Simple words but challenging and complicated. There will always be good reasons not to take the risk, but Jesus says: follow me anyway. We are asked to follow the man with nowhere to rest his head who goes where the need is. Keeping our eyes on those in greatest need is still the way for us to follow Jesus because in those faces we see the face of Jesus and how we can serve.

A recent poll² revealed that acceptance of LGBTQ people fell from 53% in 2017 to 45% in 2018 among young adults aged 18-34, reversing a decades long trend of increasing tolerance among younger generations. The AMA is predicting an epidemic of violence against trans people, especially trans people of color. We cannot allow our society to go backwards. If we are straight cis-gender people, especially if we are straight cis-gender white people, we need to be strong allies. Stronger than we are now. St. Luke's opens some doors for us to serve LGBTQ communities. We can listen and learn, we can be hospitable. It is also important that cis-gender folks revisit the margins of our own stories and remember those times when we felt like we had no place to call

² *Harris Poll on behalf of GLAAD, cited in USA today 6.27.19*

home, times when even if we had physical shelter, we felt isolated, or had doors shut in our faces, or felt unsafe or we were on the outside looking in.

Whatever *our* experience of having nowhere to call home, that is our gateway into the gospel today. Even if we have had immense privilege in our lives, there will be some small exit door out to the margins in our story. It may be like the camel and the eye of the needle for super-privileged people to experience the margin, but if we are willing all of us we can find that door. There are always human connection points between our lives because we are all children of humanity.

There is a systemic competitive devaluing going on in our national conversation today. It is part of the uncivil, demeaning climate in our public discourse. Suffering is not a competition. It is misguided and spiritually damaging to think that if we have never had an experience exactly like another, we cannot understand or identify or support. It is demeaning of another person to say if you haven't had my exact experience you cannot understand it. If this is true, we are all islands of one. We all have differing levels of privilege and likely at uneven levels. We can be privileged in some ways and underprivileged in others. Sometimes privilege is wrongly attributed and sometimes it is under-attributed. It is dangerous to diagnose the privilege of others and best to focus on

deeper awareness of our own. As long as we seek to understand and learn more, we can always be an ally. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to make those connections and bridge the gaps, as we open our hearts and minds in hospitality and desire to honor and support others with different experiences. We still have a lot of work to do for true equality that lasts, and everyone is needed to help. All ages, all races, all backgrounds, all nationalities, all life experiences and all wisdom.

Finally, let us name clearly the theology underpinning all our liberation movements. When the disciples want to rain down judgment on communities that are unwelcoming to them, Jesus rebukes them. That is not the way. Excluding or punishing those who exclude us is not the gospel. Paul nails it in the Epistle: *For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm therefore and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. For you were called to freedom...through love become slaves to one another.*

For me this is the heart of community in Christ. Paul takes the evil of slavery and applies it to our liberation in Christ. We are freed from the old covenant of legal righteousness before God, with its impossible standards and purity rules, and placed in the promised land of grace in Christ. Knowing

human nature, Paul says: be careful not to create new forms of slavery for yourselves and others, new purity categories and forms of exclusion. Paul lists lifestyle choices and also splices in destructive habits of the heart: enmities, jealousy, anger, factions, envy. Don't go back to slavery to these passions "of the flesh" (that is, to the old creation before we are clothed in Christ), Paul urges, but instead love one another, listen and learn from one another. Wash one another's feet. Don't diminish one another but build one another up in love and encouragement. Don't divide according to nationality for we are all citizens of God's community and that is the greater reality. Don't divide according to LGBTQ and A, trans and cis-gender because we are all children of humanity, born of a God who loves all of us equally. This beloved-ness is our core identity and the theological foundation of all our liberation movements and it doesn't change. Christ's liberation of us is bedrock, on which we stand generation after generation. It is glorious. It is News that is always good and always new.

AMEN

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