

MESSAGE - "One More Time"

April 23, 2021

Rev. Lisa Kruse-Safford

I've been a pastor now for nearly 27 years now....and I figure I've preached well over 1,200 sermons over the years. And I've got to say that there are weeks when the preaching task is a little hard. The words are hard to find. The sermon isn't always something that's memorable for everyone – no doubt!

It's sometimes a struggle to be relevant....like Dr. McClain taught us:

And it's sometimes a struggle to not sound repetitive.

Colleague in VA...all I end up saying every week anymore is "love one another"

I'm not sure he was grieved because he wasn't feeling creative

Or if he was grieved because he felt he needed to keep saying the same thing.

And I wonder if Peter, though still early in his preaching ministry, experienced a bit of this struggle. Because of what he says on the heels of the story we covered last week.

Last week...a lame man who was healed in the name of Jesus. and the people around him were "astonished and amazed" at it. And Peter addressed them. Let's listen:

Acts 3:12-19

¹² When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴ You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶ By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

¹⁷ "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his

Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

~~~~~

Most likely these are the same people he's already talked to.

In the previous chapter.....Peter addressed them: "Fellow Israelites" as he does here.

To a large degree, it's the same message.

Telling about Jesus. how God worked through him, fulfilled the prophets through him, how he was handed over and how he was raised. This is the same Jesus still at work in the world today.

In both stories we see the pattern:

Witnessing something amazing

Responding with surprise and awe

Then comes an explanation of what took place and proclamation of Jesus

I wonder if Peter sighed deeply as he looked out over the crowd....

Feeling like he was being repetitive

Honestly? I've gotten beyond that in these 27 years of being a pastor.

Because being repetitive is part of the nature of doing ministry

It would do us good to remember this year by year in ministry.

When we keep doing what we've been doing

When we keep speaking the same Gospel message.

Reality is, we need to keep showing up to do this even if it seems repetitive.

Each week and month, showing up to distribute food, sing songs, read the Bible, pray our prayers,

Not with the expectation of a once and done mindset

Ex: Potty-training

Not with the expectation that we will get the kingdom fully served.

Oscar Romero prayer

*It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.  
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,  
it is even beyond our vision.  
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction  
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.  
Nothing we do is complete,  
which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.  
No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.  
This is what we are about.  
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted,  
knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.  
We cannot do everything,  
and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.  
This enables us to do something,  
and to do it very well.  
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,  
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.  
We may never see the end results,  
but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders;  
ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets of a future that is not our own.*

We keep on and keep on and keep on

Repeat the messages when we need to

Do the same work when we need to

Continue being faithful to the message even when we don't see a big change in the world.

No doubt Peter was going to need to speak that same message again and again and again....so let us not lose heart these 2000 years later in doing the Gospel.

Why not give up? Why not move on to something easier? Why not?

Because God hasn't given up on us.

A few years later after that sermon Peter gave, when people were getting weary of church and tired of waiting for Jesus' return, Peter wrote something so important for us remember:

2 Peter 3:9 God is not slow as some think of as slow, but God is patient wanting everyone to come to repentance.

So let me close by perhaps sounding repetitive, but hoping that it finds its place in the broken places in your heart:

One more time:

God loves you.

Jesus died for you.

Jesus rose for you.

God wants you to return.