



## Calvary Presbyterian Church

Sunday, March 12, 2023

LENT 3: *"Smashing Alabaster: Church and Empire (Part 1)"*

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### INTRO TO OUR SCRIPTURE

He was a young, new recruit, but educated well for his job. The situation was complex and unraveling quickly. Some might have abandoned the task, but there were high stakes, and all eyes were watching.

He was a navy air traffic controller. He was watching as a jet launched successfully from the aircraft carrier's deck when he immediately noticed that the fuel doors, sparingly used to adjust it for speed and weight considerations, we're locked in an open position. Fuel was being dumped at a frightening speed and there were very few options to consider on how to bring the plane and pilot to a safe landing.

With the Navy Admiral leaning over the young controller's crewcut, he calculated that it would be positively impossible for the jet to maneuver the required full circle to return and line up with the carrier's flight deck and land safely.

The only solution was to sound the alarms, this was not a drill, and dispatch emergency protocols. As the jet had enough fuel to execute only a partial turn, the only remaining action in the sequence of emergency steps was to have the entire aircraft carrier immediately adjust its location. This would require a critical change of direction and course headings and an adjustment in speed, so that the ship could meet the jet in the middle of

her only available flight path that could land the pilot and a very expensive aircraft.

The aircraft carrier met the jet where it was at...on today's passage about Jesus beginning his ministry and calling the first disciples...we see how God meets us where we are at.

Today's Scripture reading is from Matthew 4:12-23 from the New Living Translation.

### **The Ministry of Jesus Begins**

<sup>12</sup>When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he left Judea and returned to Galilee. <sup>13</sup>He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. <sup>14</sup>This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

<sup>15</sup>"In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali, beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River, in Galilee where so many Gentiles live, <sup>16</sup>the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined."

<sup>17</sup>From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

### **The First Disciples**

<sup>18</sup>One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. <sup>19</sup>Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" <sup>20</sup>And they left their nets at once and followed him.

<sup>21</sup>A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. <sup>22</sup>They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

### **Crowds Follow Jesus**

<sup>23</sup>Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness.

INDEED Jesus meets the disciples where they are...  
he comes to the shore to meet them.

Christ, the incarnate word of God—his very presence at the time of creation as well as on the beach that day, is like an aircraft carrier meeting a jet on a collision course.

The question of who should act is like considering right away as a sailor...it is a question of power. Vessels under power understandable must give right away to vessels not under their own power...in the case of the jet and the aircraft carrier, the carrier had the power to adjust to the situation...the jet did not.

Jesus has the power and the calling to make the saving move/the restorative action...the power of Eternal Love and Amazing Grace and Radical Justice and Tender Mercies propels him to show up for them, to consider their needs, their situation, their position in life, their experiences and perspectives, and then choose just the right words to invite them to be a part of God's plan—**will you follow me and become fishers** of humanity?

Jesus as a practitioner of grace, hospitality, and adaptation. And although I try to be these things as well. I don't always get it right. This week I sensed a little crack in the way that I invited Calvary to look at the influence of empire ways within our church. I didn't do a very good job "reading the room" and being mindful of the different perspectives and life experiences of the various members of the congregation. And amid trying to walk this Lenten journey around the theme of "Smashing Alabaster" and cracking the church wide open, so that Love can pour out like expensive perfume...I fell into a crack. The cracks help us pour out Love like precious perfume. This is an opportunity for learning, adapting, returning, and restoring...

## GRACE IS THE GOLD THAT MENDS OUR CRACKS

Kintsugi is the Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold – built on the idea that in embracing flaws and imperfections, you can create an even stronger, more beautiful piece of art. Every break is unique and instead of repairing an item like new, the 400-year-old technique actually highlights the "scars" as a part of the design. We celebrate the cracks. Using this as a metaphor for healing ourselves teaches us an important lesson: Sometimes in the process of repairing things that

have broken, we actually create something more unique, beautiful and resilient. (NBCNEWS.COM)

I sensed a crack this week...I failed to meet some where they are...and I ask for your grace as I am still getting to know you—**grace as you practice KINTSUGI**—let us allow God's precious GOLD LIKE GRACE to put the broken pieces back together and create something new...

### SOMETIMES COURSE CORRECTION IS MAKING AMENDS

"Before we even understand what repentance is, we're instructed to name, out loud, the harm that we have caused." — **Danya Ruttenberg, On Repentance And Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World**

The word traditionally translated as repentance really means something more like return, and in this book, returning is a restoration, as much as is possible, to the victim, and, for the perpetrator of harm, a coming back, in humility and intentionality, to behaving as the person we might like to believe we are.

RABBI RUTTENBERG (Maimonides) laid out 5 steps:

*naming and owning harm; starting to change/transformation; restitution and accepting consequences; apology; and making different choices.*

Applying this lens to both our personal relationships and some of the most significant and painful issues of our day... (SOURCE: beacon.org)

### THE GOLDEN MOMENT

*World-renowned relationship researcher and co-founder of The Gottman Institute, Dr. John Gottman, has conducted 40 years of research with thousands of people. From his research has emerged a practice that is important to the emotional connection between two people - the act of "turning toward" your loved one when a bid is made. What is a bid?*

*According to Gottman, [a bid is an attempt to get attention, affection, or acceptance](#). It is a bid for emotional connection. "Will you play with me?" is an obvious bid, but not all bids are so clear. Therefore, it is good to familiarize ourselves with what bids are and to be mindful, being on the lookout for what our children say or do that may be a bid for connection.*

How we respond to these bids [has a great impact on the connectedness we share with our loved ones](#). There are 3 responses to bids: positive (turning toward), negative (turning away), and no response (turning away).

*The intention is to try, and when we fail, we can always come back to repair by making our own bids to them. As with all relationships, it's about the quality of connection, not the presence of perfection. (SOURCE: GOTTMAN.COM)*

I want to name that I was not mindful of the ways my words may have landed on some within the congregation. I want to invite us all into this journey of self-examination of our church and the church universal in the days ahead. I want to invite you to let me know how I might need to adjust my course, while I also will continue to invite you to consider ways to adapt or change direction or be transformed as you also become a transformative church in your communities.

Our story today is not just about Jesus meeting the disciples where they are, but meeting humanity and inviting all of us onto an adventure of faith that will bring reconciliation and repair, justice and mercy, peace, and resounding joy. Jesus meeting the disciples is God's plan for ushering heaven on earth...

CELEBRATE THE CRACKS

Leonard Cohen lyrics:

*"Ring the bells that still can ring, Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack a crack in everything, That's how the light gets in."*

May it be so. May it be so.

