

Jan 29, 2023

Let us pray.

O God of Love, O God of Truth;

Let us say strong things gently and gentle things strongly.

Let us speak the truth in love to all
and love the truth that lives in each.

Let us hear the truth as we each need it and live that truth.

O God, we heed it through Jesus; Your Word & our Lord.

Amen.

He Shall Be Known As A Nazorean

Matt. 2:19-23

“(After Joseph had escaped to Egypt after Herod threatened the life of the child, Jesus) an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, ‘Get up and take your family back to Israel, for King Herod has died.’ But hearing that Herod’s son Archelaus, was ruling in Judea, Joseph decided instead to go to Galilee and make their home in Nazareth, so that the prophesy might be fulfilled, ‘He shall be known as a Nazorean’”

John 1:43-46

“The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said, ‘Follow me’. Now Philip was from the city of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, ‘We have found the One about whom the Law of Moses and the Prophets wrote, It is Jesus, son of Joseph of Nazareth’. But Nathanael said, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ And Philip said, ‘Come and see.’”

Mark Twain once said,

All generalizations are wrong, including this one!”

So, was he saying cleverly, sometimes generalizations are right?

What are generalizations?

At their most basic, generalizing is a kind of thinking.

Starting at childhood, our immature brains learn to assess common traits of people, places and situations to figure out what is safe and what is dangerous.

Science tells us that our primitive brain – the part that tells us “fight or flight” is masterful at quick generalizing.

Indeed, that is what helped the human species survive.

So generalizing can sometimes be useful.

And let’s face it, generalizing becomes such

Because most groups have traits in common.

And many humans have a powerful drive to “fit in”, to be like those around them, to hop on the band-wagon.

Many people’s religion is that way.

Being Scottish comes with generalizations.

The Scots are known for being brave fighters, strong lovers,

Heavy drinkers, impervious to bad weather,

advocates of education and dubious connoisseurs of foods.

Oh! And being thrifty to a fault.

There's the joke about the Scottish husband headed out to the pub.
Before leaving he turns to his wife and says,
'Maggie, put on your hat and coat.'

**"Ah Dougal", she said with glee, "You sweetheart, you.
Are you taking me out to the pub?"**

**"No" said Dougal, "I'll just be switching off the heat
while I'm gone."**

We laugh because most humor is based on generalization
and it's OK when Scots generalize about themselves.
It's when generalizing is done, NOT IN HUMOR,
but in judgment, anger and fear that it turns sour.
When generalizing leads to stereotyping and prejudice
that it becomes unfaithful.

This is partly what Jesus was up against in his life.
As our scripture lesson reveals,
"Jesus shall be known as a Nazorean".

We modern Christians hear this and say, "So what!"
We've lost much of what that meant back in Jesus time.
The phrase, *"Jesus of Nazareth"* appears 17 times in the N.T..
When we hear it we merely think place on a map.
A town like any other.

We don't appreciate the extra baggage that came along
With being from Nazareth.

And that lack makes us gloss over
some important meaning to Jesus life and ministry.

So this morning, I want to help regain some of that meaning.
Afterall, if we all generalize – let us generalize according to Jesus.
He was always trying to mature us – to mold us into higher
Moral, ethical and spiritual beings,
And never stay imprisoned in our primitive brains.

“And he shall be known as a Nazorean”

When people saw Jesus that way, they were looking through
Certain kinds of eyes.

And the 1st kind is STIGMATIZE.

Nazareth was a tiny, “off-the-beaten-path” village.

Nowadays, thanks to the huge tourist trade, it is a sprawling
Arab-Israeli city.

But at the time of Jesus, it was a “one-camel” town.

Much of what Romanized towns had – paved streets,
Public baths, inns for travelers – Nazareth lacked.

But more than that, it was stigmatized.

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Nathanael blurted out.

It had a reputation for being a back-ward, less-civilized,

Country-bumpkin place to live.

Where I grew up, the derogatory term was “Chucker”.

When people first say Jesus, the Nazorean, they stigmatized him.

And isn't stigmatizing a common sin?

Don't most of us do it?

Don't we all have our own pecking orders?

Don't we all have our own versions of elitism?

Many wealthy look down upon the poor.

Many poor look down upon the wealthy.

Many well-educated look down upon the less-educated.

Many less-educated look down upon the well-educated.

Many long-timers look down upon new comers.

Many new-comers look down upon long-timers.

Many employers look down upon employees.

Many employees look down upon employers.

And don't most religions think themselves superior

To other religions?

The other day I was in a restaurant and a customer was

Berating a young woman who was waiting on his table.

Immediately I thought of the pervasive attitude of consumerism.

That allows a person to think, “Just because I am paying

For this service, I have the right to demean people as

Servants.

No wonder so many job opportunities go un-taken.

But stigmatizing works two ways.

Victims sometimes stigmatize themselves – sometimes for
A lifetime!

They define themselves by their stigmas:

Stigmas of race, mental illness, upbringing, religion.
doing constant battle with the world,
even when they don't need to.

Yes, Jesus started out being known as a Nazorean.

But he ended up being celebrated as Christ.

So stigmatize are eyes against Jesus.

But my next two kinds of eyes are in favor of Jesus.

One is "Pagan-ize".

Now, don't jump off the deep end when you hear the word,
"Pagan".

I know it conjures up some pretty negative things.

At least, "pagan" means irreligious or polytheistic.

At worst it means barbaric or satanic.

But it didn't start out that way.

The word, "pagan" derives from the Latin word "pagani".

Originally it meant simply "the country folk".

To the Romans, Nazoreans were pagani – country folk.

And over time, the Roman Church tainted the term

So that the pagani were thought to be less-civilized,

Less intelligent, and, in the eyes of God, less worthy.

When the great Celtic Christian missionary Pelageus
Was put on trial in Rome, for his country-fied theology,
He was called, a large, slow, porridge-loving pagan.

With all this,

It's possible to start seeing Jesus ministry in terms of
City-faith and country-faith.

With Jesus trying to "Pagan-ize" or countrify the city.

Now, let's no over generalize here.

Amazing and enlightening civilization has be bred in cities.

Hospitals, universities, industries, symphonies.

And certainly, Jesus called numerous city-dwellers, "disciple".

Nathanael was soon to be another.

And Lord knows, Jesus was rejected by his own home-towners.

But spiritually speaking, Jesus of Nazareth seems to have had
A mission to Pagan-ize.

- Cities were often seats of power, of kings, caesars, armies.

And to those, Jesus preached humility, meekness, peace.

- Cities were often places of anonymity for residents,

Who paid daily homage to systems and bureaucracies.

To those Jesus preached neighborliness, community, care.

- Cities were often places of opulence, luxury, classism

And to these, Jesus preached simplicity, generosity, equality.

And of course, the best way Jesus “pagan-ized”
Was through his parables – all 42 of them.
And nearly every one helped people reconnect with
Nature, with weather, with seasons, with wildlife.
And most of all reconnect with the God of Creation.
Not as pantheism but pan-en-theism.

Review the places where Jesus did the bulk of his preaching.
Bethsaida, Capernaum, Tyre and Sidon, Caesarea Philippi,
Cana – these were all cities in Jesus’ time.
And then there was Jerusalem – a city of 600,000.
The city where he was crucified.

And lastly there was the set of eyes through which
Jesus, himself saw the world: SYMPATHIZE.
To see through his eyes, we need to return to his hometown.
To when he did his first preaching
On the Sabbath, he went to the synagogue
Took out the Torah scroll and unrolled it to Isaiah.
And he read what was to his personal mission statement.
*The spirit of the Lord is upon me.
He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
To proclaim release to the captives,
Recovery of sight to the blind,
To help the oppressed go free
And declare the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

Friends, if we are going to generalize,
Let us generalize according to Jesus.
Let us think with sympathy according to his categories.
And let us realize those 3 sets of eyes:
Stigmatize, paganize and sympathize,
are the main ones through which Jesus the Nazorean
derived his world-view.

In closing, what I find interesting is how we modern Christians
Hardly ever see him just a Nazorean.
We see him as Lord of lords, Christ of all,
God's universal and eternal love for all.
And that's great.
But I'm not sure we are allowed to embrace the great
Without embracing the small.
We can't collect \$200 without passing "Go".
We can't leap to the end of his journey
Without traveling all the miles before it.

And even more, what this says is the journey of faith is one
That leads us away from our upbringing,
Away from our pride and prejudice of place or nation
Transcending all our heritages,
And onward toward a destination far greater
Than anything we can imagine.
Especially if that destiny is "the kingdom of God".

PRAYER THEN INVITE DISPLAY OF ALL TEXTILES OF OUR HERITAGES

~ ANNOUNCEMENTS SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2023

THANK OUR PIPER - EXTRAORDINAIRE JOHN SKINNER

Acolyte, Lexi Marquis Beadle Jack Marquis

Our ushers:

Our thanks to Nora Larsen for reading scripture

Our thanks to Claire Honan "Our Techie Guru" in the Balcony

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annual Meeting will be held Sunday, February 12, 2022 @11:30 AM.

MOCKTAIL PARTY SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2023 SHOW & MOVIE TUNES 5:00 PM. Performances by the famous Dorset Choir, the BBQ'ers and possibly even the Sunday School.

RENOVATION WILL BEGIN IN THE VESTRY ON FEBRUARY 6TH . We are looking for volunteers to help move the containers into the storage unit when it arrives next week. Please let the office know if you might be able to help .Many hands make light work!

FREE COMMUNITY SUPPER ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2023 FROM 5:30 -7:00 PM

MEN'S BREAKFAST ON SATURDAY, February 4th at 8:00 am

International Cultures Night, February 1, 2023 from 5:30-8:30. Please call the office if you would like to carpool, Jane will take the church bus over, see this weeks bulletin for more details.

Prayer of Pastoral Care Jan 29, 2023 Robbie Burns Sunday

Psalms 112 says, *Praise the LORD! Happy are those who revere the LORD, who greatly delight in God's commandments.* Our prayer response is:

O God, our fortress and our strength, hear our prayer.

Almighty God, through the testimony of those who know your love you have guided us to ask for what we need. Jesus called his disciples to live as a city on a hill and a lamp on a stand, that all may see your glory. We pray for the church, the community of disciples. Grant that we, who seek to follow Christ, may shine as light in our dark world.

O God, our fortress and our strength, hear our prayer.

The Apostle Paul led the church, not by lofty words of human wisdom, but by the wisdom born of your Spirit. We pray for those who serve the church; let our pastors, teachers, and those who minister in the name of Christ, temper worldly knowledge that perishes and be humbly led by your truth. **O God, our fortress and our strength, hear our prayer.**

Blessed are those who honor your commandments, O Lord. We pray for our world, for governments and for all leaders. May those who rule, honor justice and compassion, and serve the common good that the people may flourish. We pray for all caught up in the violence of war. Be with those who defend their own country in Ukraine, and with all who work and pray for peace in that land. Sustain those without heat or water during the cold of winter. And be especially with all who are working to contain cholera in Haiti; be with doctors and hospitals serving in critical areas there. **O God, our fortress and our strength, hear our prayer.**

You teach us to offer food to the hungry, and satisfy the needs of the afflicted. May we strengthen support for our local food cupboard, and efforts to feed needy families. We pray for the sick, the hungry, the poor and the homeless. We also pray for the police forces in our land. As we mourn the brutal death of Tyre Nichols, we pray for changes in police responsibility and reform, that safety may be fostered for people of all races and backgrounds. **O God, our fortress and our strength, hear our prayer.**

We lift before you those on this church's immediate needs list. ...

To you, O God, we pray, through Christ, with Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and always. Amen.

OFFERING Like a spring whose waters never fail, God calls us to share what we have received. Let us offer ourselves and our gifts to God.

***DOXOLOGY**

***PRAYER**

Loving God, receive the dedication of our heart, minds, and bodies for the ministry and outreach of your church. Bless our offering, and give us wisdom for the right use of all you have provided, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

