

Let us pray... God our Creator, true source of wisdom, whom all life flows, plant your word in our hearts today. May your truth take root and may your grace blossom in this place, cracking open the seed of love, where tendrils of hope bloom and grow... Amen.

Last Sunday, during coffee hour, I was asked about our disturbing Old Testament reading... In particular the part where God tells Elijah that certain people will be killed...

Of course, this is not the only disturbing reading in the Old Testament...

There is the well-known story of Noah and the flood, the fire God set to Sodom and Gomorrah, the death of many first-born children in Egypt, and so on and so forth...

But these unsettling texts are not just reserved for the Old Testament...

For example, our gospel today is a hard one to wrap your head around...

Here we find Jesus ignoring a woman after she called out to him...

And when he finally does speak to her, he does so by refusing to help her and compares her to a dog eating crumbs off the floor...

Why? Because she is a Canaanite woman, someone who in Jesus' time was looked at as a foreigner and an outcast...

And yet... These words came from Jesus... The exact person we would not expect such harsh words to come from...

Not only because this portrays Jesus in a negative light... But it also makes us wonder... If Jesus can treat an outsider like this, then what are we capable of?

As this passage highlights the humanity of Jesus and that his ministry took place in our world...

Where Jesus was subject to all the things that we experience... Hunger, heartache, the complexities of life, politics, and society...

And in this passage, we definitely experience the impact of society...

As Jesus demonstrates how our negative views of outsiders can impact the way that we treat them.

Which today only seems to become more complicated, as the term outsider can mean a plethora of things, and it always seems to be evolving...

An outsider can mean someone with a different religion or someone who is non-religious, someone with different sexual orientations or identifications, someone with different political views, employment status, citizenship, etc.

These are heated areas of debate and hate, and have caused deep divisions in our country...

And if we do not talk about them or address them, then we are just like Jesus and his disciples when they ignored the Canaanite woman...

Which is perhaps why we have this passage, as Jesus shows us that we are not supposed to ignore people...

Even if you say something that might be harsh... Because if you take time to listen, your eyes might just open, and you might just be transformed...

Transformed by tearing down barriers, boundaries, and biases...

Transformed by allowing you to find ways to love ALL your neighbors...

Because it is only through God's love that this transformation is possible...

As Jesus showed us today...

Which might be why Jesus acted the way that he did...

To show us that he really does get it... Jesus knows how hard it can be to go against society by helping those who are desperately in need...

While also showing us, that if we stick with them and with God, we can start to heal the deep wounds that have been caused....

Because with God transformation is always possible, as transformation is a part of God's very being...

And we see this throughout Scripture... God being transformed for the goodness of God's creation...

For example, after God flooded the world, God said it would never happen again...

And if God can recognize that God was wrong... Then we can recognize that we are wrong...

And maybe that's why we have all of those disturbing stories from the Old Testament...

Because so many of those stories place nation against nation... People against people...

Showing us through Scripture that this is dangerous... Because when we do, relationships break down... As it is impossible to be in relationship with those who we deem outsiders...

And yet, God is somehow transformed in the midst of it all... God's grace always breaks through...

Even when something is wrong, or mistakes are made...

God is there to forgive us and create a new heart in us.

Because God understands the complexities of humanity in ways that we will never come close to understanding...

And no matter how bad things get...

No matter all of the mistakes we make...

We are always and forever loved by God and through that love we can grow...

And so, we are called to share that love... Through loving God, loving our neighbors, and loving ourselves... Even if that means starting off fresh every single day...

Because every day is filled with God's grace, goodness, and forgiveness.

Everyday there are opportunities for growth and for transformation.

Everyday we are called to show up for ourselves and for others in ways that stretch our love...

In ways that invite reflection, healing, and grace.

Because if God can be transformed, just think what God can do in you...

Amen.