

October 17, 2021

**“Rest Awhile, “We’ve Got You”
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake**

Job 38:1-7

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

Gird up your loins like a man,

I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

On what were its bases sunk,

or who laid its cornerstone

when the morning stars sang together

and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

Mark 10:35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be servant of all. For I came not to be served but to serve, and to give my life a ransom for many.”

Sermon “Rest Awhile, “We’ve Got You”

These two scriptures have something definitely in common, in both of the stories, God and Jesus aren’t necessarily putting humans in their place but they are both certainly helping humans gain some perspective of their limitations compared to the Almighty.

In Job, God doesn’t really come out and say “who the heck do you think you are?” It is more of a “don’t you remember who I am”. The same goes with Jesus. He has had enough of the petty, human squabbles and tries to get them to understand, once again, that it is not about power and prestige but the power of love and service.

In Twelve Step meetings when a newcomer comes in, they have often been hurt by organized religion and they end up translating that into no longer having faith in God. As they come to understand that the 12 step program isn’t about religion but about developing a relationship to a higher power, they come first to this conclusion; there is a God, and it is not me. They also learn the group is saying “*We’ve Got You*”, God’s got you, and you are loved.”

Both God and Jesus make that point in these stories, we humans are not God. We certainly act like we are sometimes, and though we carry that divine spark, like God said to Job, we speak without knowledge.

But what we do know, what Jesus kept trying to teach us over and over again is that our faith is about service to each other. Our faith is about humbling ourselves, not trying to be at the front of the line. Our faith is about turning the world upside down. A world that continues to not listen and continues to construct itself on power, privilege, control, and domination and ignore the needs of the poor and broken hearted.

The “Christian Church” that history sees, is made of this. From the moment Jesus left this Earth the fight to be first began. Who was going to be the leader? Who was going to interpret his message correctly? And then when we became the national religion of Rome, well you all know how that went: wars, assassinations, crusades, abuse, and more wars, and more abuse.

Abuse not just by the Catholics but in every church where people weren’t welcomed, in every church where people were broken by doctrines, in every church where people left feeling shame and not love.

Over time the message of love and service that Jesus kept trying to teach us seemed obscured by the powerful trying to hold on to that power, their wealth and their secrets. Christianity began to be about rules, it became about how to save yourself from hell, it became about anything but service.

I do want to point out though, that from the churches' beginnings there have always been people like you, not in positions of vast power but who understand this message of service, that understand being there for each other.

While the popes were poisoning one another to be first, while the reformationist were toppling governments and heads and fighting their own fight to be first, there were people giving everything to the poor, there were nuns building hospitals, and orphanages, there were people who gave their whole lives in the service of others, abolitionists who fought for justice, and people on the frontlines of the battle for equality— but not many of them made the headlines then and they don't tend to make them now.

There were mystics, poets and artists and lovers of the word of God who knew that word was love.

Sometimes I fear that Jesus' message will completely get lost among the scandal, hypocrisy, the misinterpretation of scripture, the thirst for power and the pettiness of human nature. But then I walk in here and I know all is not lost.

It is right here and we aren't the only ones, who believe in service, in healing, in inclusion of every single one of God's children and we certainly believe in love. Love like that can not be drowned out by the bickering and squabbling of humanity. It is not easy work, we often want to stay home, not volunteer, not risk vulnerability, but it is our primary mission.

You may be wondering why I have a picture of a dog sled up there. I heard a story the other day that made me think of this church and made me think of my understanding of God.

I heard that during long dog races like the Iditarod, many drivers build a kennel directly on the sleigh. That way when one dog gets tired, he can rest while the others just carry him forward. ““We've Got You”, take a break”. I felt that way when you all made sure that I had a weekend off to restore myself spiritually, like you were saying: “*We've Got You*”, get some rest”.

Isn't this the crux of service, to be there, to carry others when they can't go on another step, to help others when their hearts and minds break? Isn't it about making sure that they are fed and clothed and tended to when life has turned in a way for them that they can't go on without rest.

I have seen you all do this a myriad of times. Put each other on the sleigh and say “*We've Got You*”, get some rest”. I see it when people come to the food pantry, that look of relief in their eyes when they leave with food for their family. ““*We've Got You*””.

I know that our parsonage houses someone right now. “*We've Got You*”, and Family Promise, all the things that go on in this church. Our church is like that kennel on the sleigh, it constantly proclaims “*We've Got You*”.

I have seen you carry each other through some really hard stuff too, saying to each other when death or illness strikes, “*We've Got You*”.

No, the message of Jesus is far from lost. It doesn't matter how much the powerful try to pervert Christianity to garner votes, and to feel good about themselves at the expense of others. That radical message, that turns everything upside down, it will not be silenced by them for, like Job, they are not God.

This work, this commitment to service is not just happening here but all over the world in thousands of churches, in twelve step meetings, in hospitals, nursing homes and homeless shelters.

It's happening in your own homes as you take care of your families in times of need. So many places people helping others, Saying "*We've Got You*", rest awhile". And let us not forget, who has us.

At night when I go to bed, I put my day, all my worries, all of you, my prayers for you, my concerns for the world, my fears about the future of the church and our country, I put that all in God's hands, knowing that while I rest, God's got me.

God will restore our hope, God will give us the power, energy and courage so that we can give it to others both in and outside this building.

Of course we can do more, and when we think about where we want to be in five years, as we think about our pledges financially but also of our time and energy, I'd like us to think about how we can expand our ministry, how can we make our message of Love louder than the hateful noise around us.

How can we get more people to come rest with us, to come be filled with the Love of God and find new hope in themselves and the world. How can we continue to say "*We've Got You*", God's got you, and you are loved." AMEN

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REST AWHILE

We've got you!

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PARKSIDE COMMUNITY
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

