

Sunday, February 26, 2017 - The Most Important Things

Matthew 17:1-9 CEB

Marysville United Methodist Church

Pastor Jenny Smith

Did you know that there is a place deep inside of you, at the very center of who you are that knows who you are? Some of you have found that place and you live from that place easily. Many of us struggle to find that place throughout our lives, much less to live from that strong and confident identity day in and day out. We often opt for the easier path - the one of least resistance, the stays on the surface of things, that shies away from the parts of ourselves we don't like or don't understand.

I still remember getting out of the car most mornings as my dad dropped me off at Soldotna Middle School and hearing the phrase, "Remember who you are." Remember who you are. A helpful reminder in the days of plummeting confidence, insecurity and trying to fit in with the latest trend of 7th grade. My dad knew who I was at the very center of myself and reminded me often on the days I forgot. In fact, my parents still remind me who I am from time to time. We all could use some help remembering.

That place deep inside of me? It's filled with the most important things to me. My values. The things I hold with such intention, that when they lose priority in my life, I drift. Sometimes so quickly that I notice. Other times, it takes months or even years before I notice the slight changes.

When we take time in our lives to define the most important things to us, our values, and then we align our lives with those, God can do some pretty incredible things in and through us.

Jesus was reminded several times that at the core of who he was, he was a beloved child of God. God was pleased with him. And because Jesus knew his identity and the most important things to him, he was able to live out a life that changed the world.

And because of who Jesus was and what he did, we are a community today. We're not a social club. We don't pay dues. Membership has no perks. We all get to choose to be a part of this community. Which I might add, is a pretty big deal nowadays. Many of us are commitment-phobic. We like to have all our options on the table and struggle to choose one thing over another. So the fact that you have chosen to be a part of this faith community means **a lot** these days. This might be something you deeply value.

It will take the rest of our lives to understand what Jesus was really up to. It seems to be about identity, that we are beloved children of God, even when we don't act or feel like it. It seems to be about loving people, all people, even when we don't act or feel like it. And it seems to be about not being afraid. That God has called each of us individually and as a body to help heal our world.

I cannot follow Jesus alone. I don't want to. Well, some days I do. People are annoying and hard to love. But each time I walk in this place, I'm reminded what we get to do is pretty incredible work. **There's something about this group of people that makes following Jesus fun, even when it's not easy.**

And part of that is our culture. Our values. What makes us *us*. Because if you haven't noticed, you're not like every other church in the world. There are some things that make you unique.

I do have to confess I have some baggage with churches and mission statements and values and etc. I've seen plenty of churches spent months and even years defining who they are, only to slap a list up

on the wall and promptly forget about it. All the work and discernment they did to define themselves doesn't change who they are. There's no accountability.

So today I know some of you will roll your eyes and wonder why we need to celebrate our culture and values. That's okay. But let me tell you one reason this is important.

What we have here is sacred. Holy. Unusual. Important. And one of my primary roles is to protect it. To help us say yes and no to different opportunities. To not sacrifice who we are in this world.

So when we celebrate our values, we remind ourselves who we are. And we each must know who we are, before God calls us forward for the next part of our journey.

An Open Mic sharing time of how we see our values coming to life

Grace and Love are for all people

God loves all people and families. So do we.

God welcomes our questions and doubts

We grow by staying in hard conversations with God and each other. We don't back down from our doubts and tough questions. We journey into them together.

Becoming whole in Christ

We're always in process, learning, challenging, seeking. Our growth as a disciple of Jesus Christ never ends.

Cultivating a sustainable rhythm

Our world moves fast and God invites us to slow down. We honor the Sabbath and seek a pace that makes room for the Spirit to move.

Every story matters

Our personal and communal story matters. We share good news with Marysville with transparency, honesty and purpose.

Our faith impacts our community

We are the hands and feet of Christ in Marysville and around the world. Our work for social justice means this love is for all people.

Everyone is in ministry

Each of us have a gift to share and we find our sweet spot to serve and lead. We disciple leaders who disciple leaders who disciple leaders.

Our purpose matters more than our preference.

We give up things we love for people we love even more. It's a joy to let go of the way it's always been so we can see the new thing God is doing.