

Sunday, February 5, 2017 - Tell Me A Story

John 4:4-15

Marysville United Methodist Church

Pastor Jenny Smith

I have a pretty well worn path between our home and this building. Turn left out of our driveway. Left onto 80th. Left on 51st. Go through the light at Grove. Drive by Jennings Park. Pull up to the light by the new Starbucks. Turn left onto 64th. Follow that around until I turn right in our parking lot.

I go the same way every time. Same lanes, same lights, same turns. I can do it on auto pilot. It's nice to not have one more decision to make.

Sometimes I do that with my schedule too. I like when I can schedule appointments with people and create space to write and create. I know in my head that interruptions are where the best ministry can happen, but my first response isn't always so holy. There are days when people from our community stop by and want a listening ear. I say yes and find myself on a couch listening to a story for an hour. Part of me hears God's whisper to show up and pay attention. "This is my child. Listen." And part of me is saying, "this is really throwing off my do list today."

I don't always do a great job of getting outside my box, the lines I try to draw around my comfortable routine. What about you? It's normal that we find comfort in our routine but what do you do when an opportunity presents itself to cross a line and connect with a new person in a new way?

Run for the hills? Take a deep breath and show up? It's not easy.

Illustrate how we draw lines - Hang a rope over two chairs in front of the communion table

We spend so much energy figuring out the line, creating the line, naming the line, arranging our lives around the line, that we sometimes don't realize the line doesn't even exist.

In the kingdom of God, all the lines we try to draw are not real.

Jesus story - woman at the well (John 4:7-10)

For this moment to happen, Jesus was in an odd place at an odd time.

Jesus is off the beaten path, not in the usual areas of his life and ministry, Judea & Galilee. Jesus is in a foreign place and he's tired. It's here in this out of bounds place that a gospel conversation occurs.

It's noon. The hottest time of day. Most people got their water in the cool of the morning or evening air. Why was she there? This was the time that people who were socially ostracized or ashamed would go to the well so they wouldn't have to face the harsh treatment from others in the community.

Sometimes showing up means doing it at a place and time that's not part of our normal rhythm.

Jesus crosses a line. Jewish rabbis didn't have conversations with women in public. A Jew wouldn't interact with a Samaritan like this.

The Samaritan woman questions this move Jesus is making. "Are you sure you want to do this?" Jesus: If you recognized God's gift in front of you, you would cross the line...and you would receive living water.

And because many of us in the church live in a world of controlled conversations that happen on our phones or in this building or in our homes, we have such a routine that there's little time for the unexpected or off the plan encounters.

When we venture out, our own understandings are transformed and changed as we, like the Samaritan woman, encounter the Christ who offers us living water. We may come to realize how thirsty we have become in our safe and controlled worlds (Thomas W. Walker, Feasting on the Word).

Fear tries to stop us from crossing these lines we've created.

And we miss the living water.

There's a gift on the other side of the line. Jesus is on the other side of the lines we try to draw.

We are called to challenge the many boundaries and barriers that we encounter or even create in our communities, our culture and our world. And Jesus shows us how to do with grace and compassion.

Transition to communion