

Sunday, May 21, 2017 - Becoming Love: Lose the Cape

Mark 10:35-45 MSG

Putting on a cape -- Have you ever had a time when you did something great for somebody else and you really wanted people to know? You wanted credit, a gold star, a ton of likes on the photo you posted, brownie points, or just a brownie. I mean, you stepped outside of your bubble, thought of someone else and did something nice. This is a moment to be marked. A story to be told!

This happens to me a lot with parenting in the age of social media. For anyone who's been within a 10 foot radius of children at any point in your life for more than 30 minutes, you know they can be exhausting. Yesterday, Aaron was on the men's retreat and I decided I wanted to go on an adventure. And these kids of ours were going to have to come with me.

So we got up, I made them breakfast, I packed them a lunch, got them dressed, packed extra clothes, diapers, more snacks, filled water bottles, put shoes and jackets on and got them in their car seats. Then we were off to Anacortes for a day exploring the water, rock climbing, the farmer's market and a playground. It was glorious! And part of me was fully present the whole time, soaking it in. It really was fantastic. And part of me was thinking about how I could share this day with my family and friends. Yes, it comes from a place of meaningful connection. But it also comes from a place of "someone else needs to know everything I did with these kids today because it was exhausting and I want people to think I'm a good Mom. And if I don't post something about today, then did it really happen?"

That's us. A mix of good and weird intentions. Maybe this wanting-the-credit type of thing happens to you too. It happens to me more than I'd like to admit. I sometimes want the glory. The honor. The recognition. The "thank you's." And yet... this Jesus life points in a little different direction.

Today we're going to talk about capes, Jesus and what secretly incredible people know.

How often do we approach God like these disciples did? "God, we need you to do something for us. Arrange it so everyone knows how wonderful we are." And Jesus says, "You have no idea what you're asking. I'm not in the business of awarding honor."

Jesus' upside down kingdom appears again -- "whoever wants to be great must become a servant."

Think about your work, our community, our families, our nation, our world -- is this how most of those systems work? The people who humbly and quietly serve others for our common good -- are they lifted up as the greatest among us? Not usually. Their voices are often ignored, their work is under resourced, we don't pay them much attention. And yet, day after day, they are intentionally organizing, fighting for the voices of others to be heard and walking alongside people who have been left behind.

We live in a culture where the loud actions get the attention. Something didn't actually happen if a picture wasn't taken, a tweet wasn't sent out, we didn't check in on Facebook or we didn't compose a perfectly written status update.

Our culture tries to tell us our value lies in the recognition we receive. If we didn't get thanked or praised, then did the act really happen? Did our work matter? What if no one knows about the kind and quiet acts of service you do? Is it okay if no one sees our cape?

Show *The Incredibles* movie clip - "No capes!" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4R2aW03pwL0>

Bob Goff, author of "Love Does" shares this idea: **You can get a lot more stuff done without a cape.** I think Jesus would agree. (*Take off cape.*)

Jesus would do something incredible - raised a girl from the dead - healed a guy with leprosy - healed 2 blind guys and what did he say afterwards? "Don't tell anyone."

Now there are some good reasons he said this, but it also teaches us something important. We live in a world that encourages us to share everything we do, but Jesus modeled something different. Instead of telling others what we're doing all the time, there's a better way - one that doesn't require any capes that can get snagged on something - like ourselves.

Maybe Jesus just wants us to be secretly awesome instead. That was Jesus' marketing plan.

(Which by the way, is always a big learning curve for me. Part of my background is in communications. There are pros to having that background. I can help us tell the story of what God is doing in this place. One of the downsides is that I used to think no ministry could happen without a logo, website, posters, T-shirts and invite cards. Seriously.)

Secretly incredible people keep what they do one of God's best kept secrets because the only One who needs to know, God, already knows.

But it's hard! We want people to know the good things we do - and we think we need a mission statement, budget, organization or club to start doing things.

Secretly incredible people just *do things*.

Here's a new mission statement you could have: Be Awesome. That's it. I think that's all Jesus would have written down for our mission statement. Love people. Be awesome. Don't make a huge deal about it.

Jesus modeled we don't need to talk about everything we've done. It's like Jesus was saying, "What if we were just to do awesome, incredible stuff together while we're here on earth, and the fact that only God knew would be enough? If we did that, we wouldn't get confused about who was really making things happen. Not surprisingly, we'd get a lot more done too, because we wouldn't care who's looking or taking credit. All that energy would be funneled into awesomeness (Bob Goff, Love Does).

Verse 40, Jesus says: **But as to awarding places of honor, that's not my business.**

Jesus doesn't play the honor and recognition game. All the ways we try to impress, amass, earn, strive and seek power, recognition, money, fame...it's exhausting. And Jesus doesn't play that game. The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that we don't have to play that game either.

Invite Sherry Haigh up to talk about A Simple Gesture

Jesus: **When people get a little power how quickly it goes to their heads. It's not going to be that way with you. Whoever wants to be great must become a servant.**

Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer and Mahatma Gandhi were three towering figures of the twentieth century.

Schweitzer was a brilliant German theologian and philosopher who felt the call of God to work as a missionary doctor in Africa. So the highly esteemed professor returned to his university as a student

of medicine. Family and friends thought him crazy and tried to dissuade him. But Albert was true to God's call. He entered medical school in 1905 and spent the next seven years studying, all with the goal of missionary service.

Albert and his wife, Helene, took the long journey to Africa. and set up a hospital in a remote region of Gabon. For the next four decades they treated patients, many walking hundreds of miles to receive help. Despite the remoteness of their location Schweitzer became a celebrated humanitarian and philosopher, so much so that he was awarded the Nobel Peace prize.

Ghandi of course was the non-violent activist who brought the British to their knees in India and secured independence for his people.

The third member of our trio was Albert Einstein, the greatest scientist of his time, perhaps of any time. Why does he belong here? It's said that throughout his life Albert Einstein had two portraits on the wall of his home – the great scientists Newton and Maxwell. They were an inspiration, they summed up the drive of his life – science. Towards the end of his life Einstein took their pictures down and replaced them with two others – two great humanitarians, Gandhi and Albert Schweitzer. He explained that it was time to replace the image of success with the image of service.

Today we close with these questions: Where are you seeking recognition or power right now? It happens, we're human. But the better question is, where is God inviting you be a servant? To literally become love. And to be secretly incredible. Amen!