

## **Sunday, Sept 4, 2016 – Discipleship on the Coast: Welcoming Others**

John 21:1-13 CEB

Marysville United Methodist Church

Pastor Jenny Smith

Review the whole series – worship as bonfire on the beach, wading in to learn something new, getting into a boat and navigating as a leader

Today, we talk about what it means to be a lifeguard in our story of discipleship.

There's this notion in Christianity that evangelism is incredibly urgent. So we need to get as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, to know who Jesus is and pray and prayer so we can check them off our list. Mmmm. I don't know. I tried that form of evangelism in college and it rang hollow. It didn't feel genuine or honest.

So here's the kind of evangelism I prefer nowadays. Let's be lifeguards.

- A lifeguard is a first responder to someone in need. Usually someone who's near us. And it's usually one person at a time.
- Lifeguards are alert. We're paying attention.
- We listen to someone's needs or story and respond with what we have to offer at the time
- This isn't about thinking we're so wonderful and opening up our arms and saving every single person in sight. Being a lifeguard means we show up and pay attention to life around us. When we sense God nudging us towards one person, we show up for them. With care, compassion, a listening ear, an encouraging text. Then let it play out. We cooperate with what God is already doing in their life and we release the outcome.
- I used to think evangelism was all about manipulation and getting someone to say a certain prayer and accept Jesus into their heart and I could check them off my list. Now, evangelism is listening deeply to another person with no strings attached. Pure grace. If the moment presents itself, I offer to share part of my story. That's it. God does the rest.
- Today, I want to share with you part of Lisa's story. She's learning she has a story to share with her world and is willing to wade into that space if it helps connects others with God.

Share Marisa's story: <https://www.facebook.com/marysvilleunitedmethodistchurch/videos/>

### **Lifeguard reflection**

- A lifeguard pulls someone to safety, maybe even to a bonfire, and lets them warm up. A lifeguard points to a place they can get more help. A lifeguard doesn't do everything for them.
- Here's one of the coolest parts of discipleship to me. All of us have been lifeguards for someone else, even when we didn't know it.
- People are watching our lives. They notice how we live, how we love, the choices we make. It's okay if you don't have language for your story with Jesus yet. If you feel compelled to talk about it, God will give you the words. In the meantime, follow Jesus with all you've got. People will notice.
- Being a lifeguard means living your life in the footsteps of Jesus the best you know how and trusting people are watching that rhythm. Sometimes, it means being willing to share your story with someone else when the moment presents itself.

- **Because this what the Jesus story is all about. One at a time, we encounter the life of Jesus and something inside of us breaks open with truth and grace and love. It catches us off guard, and yet, our soul saw it coming.** This is why we share our stories when it happens to us. There's a saying that Christianity is simply one beggar telling another beggar where they found bread. This is why we share our stories.

### **Closing**

- Jesus' original disciples needed repetition to learn what Jesus was trying to teach them. They keep walking path from ignorance to belief. So do we. We're always moving from the bonfire to a boat to the shore to being a navigator to a lifeguard and back to the bonfire.
- This is discipleship. I've been told we never quite arrive at the finish line. This is not a linear path. It's a story we find ourselves in. Over and over.
- We end this series where we started. At the communion table. We keep returning to this table. And to this story. Amen.