

Standing in the Middle

Mark 3:19-28

Sunday, January 20, 2019

Mission's is not only standing in the middle of the lives of the vulnerable, waiting for the embrace of the healing of God. But it is also "standing on the edge" of a cliff, wondering if I should either step off or step back. It means risking what is easy for me, opposed to what God wants me to do. Every person that achieves things for God begins with a simple question, "Will I go?" "Will I step out onto the path? From there it is either yes or no. So what is standing in our way? --fear and uncertainty.

I have always heard a haunting, if not forbidding, sound in Jesus' warning to his disciples, "I send you out as lambs among wolves." He throws a little intensity into their decision-making; so as to halt their easy, if not cavalier, posture toward their going. Mission's is not easy. It is a way of living in the world which demands an intensity and courage to stand against the voices that want to divert you; or defeat you through despair.

Jesus had his own moment of decision that would defined his mission. After emerging from his forty-day fast and temptation, he called together his team to work on his ministry. Then they went to work. It was then he had his first confrontation with the powers that existed in Israel. They wanted to stop him so they threw the book at him. They accused him of being the devil. By doing so they wanted to freeze his ministry, turning the people against him. This was his first challenge to his mission. He was standing on the edge; he was ready to jump into the fire. What does he do? Will it end or will it continue? Will the powers intimidate these young men, and Jesus, so that they become shells of their intended purpose and fail?

The story goes like this---- The religious leaders accused Jesus of using the power of Beelzebub (The Lord of the Storm) to perform his miracles, which were done on the sabbath. Jesus is seen as a deviant parishioner and even more than that; he is an evil man who is using evil to perform his miracles. Jesus finds the logic suspect. How can Satan, cast out Satan? A house divided cannot stand. His point being that their rhetoric of blame has no power to stand against the truth.

His final statement directed to everyone standing there, including the religious leaders, is this: "You must first bind the strong man before you can plunder his house." The point being is that "he is coming after them". He is not the one that stands against God, they are.

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assault and intimidation. It is then we must “stand on the edge” and leap into the field of battle.

The only thing that stands between us and our adventure is the word, “Yes.” But when it means standing your ground, our “yes” to God means saying “No” to the accuser. These are words with which all mission adventures begin. It doesn’t necessarily begin with strategies, maps, contacts and money. It begins with a heart that believes that faith will take me to where God wants me to be and God will give me the gifts to survive and resist. It means willing to suffer fear, uncertainty, and criticism and yes even the comforts of life.

As we get to know the voice of God these forbidding feelings diminish while we are beginning to hear the voice of God. We hear in this voice the words, “Take up your cross and follow me,” not the impossible, but words of freedom. We hear also the familiar words, “Not my will, but thy will be done.” Placing your heart in the hands of God is risk taking. But it is necessary part of the mission of Jesus and therefore a part of our mission as well.

Take for instance Martin Luther and St. Francis. Luther said yes to the voice of God long before he stood before the tribunal at Worms, where he said, “Here I stand.” He stood on the edge for years until he took the leap. The fear of his life, his job and his reputation must have weighed him down until he released himself from their control with the word, yes. St. Francis had a similar story. For two years St. Francis was wandering throughout Italy and full of doubt and fear about his life until he said, yes. It wasn’t until he went to a small village church, where he knew the priest, and heard the gospel text of Luke 10:1-24. He arose from that service and said to himself, “This is what my heart has been wanting for years. This will be my life work to go to villages and preach the simple gospel with nothing in my pocket.” It took more time to step out. He was still standing on the edge and wondering if he could when the road appeared to him. All he had to do was say yes. He did and the rest is history.

Standing on the edge means you are looking back as well as looking forward. What lies behind us is the familiar, the comfortable without much change. What lies ahead is uncertain. How much will this new direction cost me in effort, suffering and anxiety? Can I actually achieve what I am dreaming? We are lambs among wolves. And part of being hunted down is not only the wolves out there; it is the wolves inside our heads. Mission’s is fighting off the wolves that bite away at our hope and or our determination to listen to God. But we must say, NO, to them. This is freedom. This is mission. Only then can we go with a sense of purpose that is able to deflect the voice of the negative.

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