

Sermon Script May 24, 2020

I recently re-watched the movie, "The Lion King." Yup, that's how I roll. Hakuna-matata.

One of my favorite scenes in the movie is where Simba, the young, lion prince, is struggling with returning home, Pride Rock. After his father's (Mufasa's) death, he fled home, broken, ashamed, grieving, afraid...because he thought he was the reason his father had died. Years later, he learns that his family and home are devastated, hungry, living in fear and oppression. But the shame he carries runs deep within him and he refuses to return...until....

There is the wonderful character, a baboon named Rafiki who...lives and moves somewhat like I envision the Holy Spirit. When you listen to Rafiki, much wisdom flows from his words. Sometimes they can hurt and make you wrestle with difficult things. BUT, Rafiki, like the Spirit, is seemingly present at just the right time, offering the gift of identity and relationship.

For Simba, he has forgotten who he is and to whom he belongs. He is Mufasa's son, heir to the throne, but, because of his guilt, grief and shame, Simba cannot see this relationship any longer. All that Simba can see is guilt and how it has isolated and separated him from all that he loves and who love him. UNTIL... Rafiki invites him to look closer. Look closer to who he is and to whom he has his identity. Simba gazes into the waters of...its an actual pond, but I wonder if it might be thought of a Baptismal font? Reflecting back at him is the image of his father. The challenge, pain and grief do not disappear, BUT, his true identity is re-revealed to him and this is enough for him to return to those he loves. Or, I might say, what reflected back to him is the unity he has with his father and all that he loves and who love him...just as he is. This identity and unity transforms the grief, pain, and isolation into strength for the days ahead and moves him to live out this identity and all the responsibility that goes with it. AND, it is a Disney movie after all, in the end, there is reconciliation, hope, restoration of life and yes, joy.

Today, Jesus is preparing his disciples for his death and the reality that they will not be able to see him any longer, because he will be returning to his Father. This news also comes with the promise of a new Advocate,

the Holy Spirit that will be with, guide and remind them of their identity with Christ and the work that goes with this blessed identity.

When they hear this, they are filled with sorrow, confusion and maybe even some hints of fear. Jesus prays in front of the disciples that they will know the relationship that Jesus and his Father have as being one...AND...that they will know the same unity with one another. This unity that Jesus prays for is a unity that God brings and is not dependent on the disciples doing or saying the right things or even if they are gathered in the same place. In fact, Jesus tells them that they will scatter, "each to their own home." (John 16:32)

Sisters and Brothers in Christ, today, I want you to know, from my own home, I feel and know the sorrow and the pain of being scattered. Maybe you do, too. At times, it may be difficult to see Christ. We may even find ourselves, like the disciples at the ascension of Christ, gazing up to the clouds all the while wondering, where has God gone and the overwhelming feeling of being alone, very alone, consumes us.

Here's where Rafiki jumps back into the story...ok, the Holy Spirit jumps in and invites us to look into the waters of our Baptism and "look closer." Look into these waters and see, reflected back to us the image of God, our Father, our Savior and our Advocate, peering back to us. And maybe, just maybe the images of our siblings in Christ, joining us in love. This transformational reminder that we may be separated, but we are NOT alone and we still celebrate and proclaim a unity that God promises us. This unity with God and with one another is not dependent on us being in the same space or even the same time. This unity is promise and gift of God.

May this reminder and reflection transform our isolation, pain and sorrow into a life that is ignited with strength to reach out to the hurting and afraid, with love and compassion. And know, our sorrow will be turned to joy. Thanks be to God.