

Redescribing the World

Pentecost 22 B 2018

St. Andrew's Kelowna

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In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Well, we woke up to much of the same this morning. We have elected our Mayor and Council and with them the issues, stories and perspectives that will define our City for the next term. And whether we agree or not with these issues, stories and perspectives, we are surrounded by narratives that offer to define us daily not the least of which are found in local politics. The Biblical Scholar Walter Brueggemann wrote a book called *The Word the Redescribes the World* in which he said that the biblical story is always redescribing our world's story and when we encounter scripture we can look for 3 things: redecription, possibility and the practice of discipleship.

This morning we are given a Gospel reading in which Jesus continues to redescribe the world for his disciples. This conversation with James and John follows right on the heels of last week's story about the wealthy man whom is told to give away all his possessions before coming to follow Jesus. The disciples were shocked to learn that wealth was neither a sign of God's favour nor a sign of power and glory in Christ's Kingdom. Jesus redescribes their, and our, understanding of power and glory saying that true power and wealth and riches is found in being a servant. Jesus keeps redescribing the story they think they know, Jesus keeps, in fact, redescribing them through their hopes for greatness, as he tells his disciples about the torture and death that await him in Jerusalem. We might wonder how on earth James and John missed Jesus's point and thought they should ask to for special places in Christ's glory. They don't yet understand that everything, absolutely everything to do with following Jesus only makes sense when understood through his crucifixion and resurrection: what it means to be powerful, to be loving, to be holy, to be human, to be first, to be last, everything is defined and redescribed by Christ's ultimate gift of self and the gift of new life. To be great is to be a servant; to be first is to be a slave of all of which Jesus is the prime example, the first fruits of what we are called to become. And so Jesus asks them: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink; to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" In other words, 'are you able to live the life that I live, to undergo suffering with me, to be obedient with me, to serve with me, to participate in all that I am?'. Are you able to let every part of your earthly life be redescribed by my death and resurrection?

This is no small question and no small possibility. Can you imagine a world that understood greatness as servanthood? What would our politics look like, our care for creation, our economies? If we still had a stock market the most highly traded companies would be ones like NOW Canada and the World Food Program? What would the church be up to in a world like that? Can you drink this cup; can you imagine and live your life in such a way that tells a deeply different story?

Jesus' question reminds us that when 2 or 3 believers gather together we are called to become a community that is constantly being redefined by Christ's own giving. Not only long ago on Calvary but also the giving of the Risen Christ who is with us now. The preacher David Lose says it this way: "when God came to us fully and completely as we are, joining God's abundant love to our mortal life... we completely misunderstood it, fled from it, were threatened from it and, ultimately, put the Word of God and Son of Man to death. And yet Jesus came anyway. And still does. Three times Jesus tells the disciples what will happen in Jerusalem. Three times they misunderstand. And he goes there anyway. He keeps marching, keeps healing, keeps loving, keeps serving, keeps giving himself as a ransom to save us from ourselves. And he will continue to do just that. Until all of us are saved, overwhelmed, crucified, and raised again by God's unending, all-encompassing love."

So church is the gathering of people in whom God is alive and is redescribing our world through the continual gift of that all-encompassing love! *This* is what attracts people to church and this is what all of our organizing and committees need to be about. The author of the famous story *The Little Prince* once wrote: "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea." Teach them to long for God and for the world God is longing to make. The practice of discipleship then is allowing Christ to define and redescribe every single part of our lives so that Christ becomes our pattern, our story, our life and our love and we teach others to fall in love with him.

And so it's no surprise then that an equal part of our practice of discipleship is the Eucharist, the sacrament through which Christ continually makes himself a gift to us and for us. For it is at the Eucharistic table that are given the cup of Christ's death and life but unlike James and John we don't say 'We are able' we say 'Amen' which means 'may it be so'. May all the transformation Christ wants to work in us, be so, may all the redescribing God longs to work in world be so. May we fall in love with the immensity of God's all-encompassing love. And to the call to teach others to fall in love too, may we say:

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