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Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
The Necessity of Pain
Luke 17:11-19
June , 2018, Jeff Germo

Last week we talked a bit more about the authority of Jesus and I said that if we really have given authority of our lives to Jesus it would change so much about how we face our past, present and future. I confessed to you that in some ways I have not given authority to Jesus which is evidenced in the fact that I find it hard to sabbath. I want to clear this up a bit before we dig into our passage for today.

When I talk about sabbathing, I'm not talking about observing a certain day called 'The Sabbath.' That is Old Testament law. Jesus satisfied all the law through the cross. We are not bound to the law. That is what Paul's letter to the Galatians is all about. We spent considerable time on that a few years ago. He also spent a good amount of ink trying to unravel some misunderstanding about sabbath to the churches in Rome. Sabbath is not about a day. It is about a heart attitude. It's not a question of, 'Did I work on Sunday or not?' If that were the case, I would have no possibility of ever keeping sabbath.

When we talk about Sabbath we are talking about a question of the heart. Do I trust God enough to give him authority over my schedule, and every part of my life? In Romans 14 Paul clearly said that Sabbath is a matter of the heart, not a day. When I confessed to you that I did not trust God enough to let go of 'my ministry' (which is actually not my ministry, it's his ministry), it wasn't just that I was not setting apart a day that I call 'sabbath.' That is not it at all. The main point was that my heart has not been right. I was trying to do God's job. God has not posted a job opening to take his place. He is doing a more than adequate job.

Jesus said that God created the sabbath for man, not man for the sabbath. He gave us sabbath for us, for a couple reasons. First, so we would have time to regenerate. We were not created for sabbath. Sabbath is not a law to keep for the sake of the law. Sabbath is a gracious provision by God so we don't do damage to our body, mind and spirit. The body, mind, and spirit need sabbath. God knows that.

We all have the same number of days in a week, and if we use all of them for work, it is harmful to our body, mind and spirit. That doesn't necessarily mean when we sabbath we just sit on our deck all day. Sabbath will look different for each person. What is regenerative for your body, mind and spirit?

In my ministry I don't get much physical activity, so the thing that is most regenerative for me is doing some physical labour, such as building something, or doing some gardening with Ruth. To me, that is sabbath. When I use up all my regular work schedule and my work spills over into what should be sabbath for me, I am saying that I don't trust God enough to let him make up the difference. This is the second reason for sabbath. When we sabbath, it acknowledges that God is God and we are not, and our success, or not, is dependant on him. I hope that makes sense.

Today we are going to look at a passage of Scripture that we looked at briefly a couple weeks ago in Luke 17:11-19. Let's walk through this passage and see what God has for us.

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Luke 17:11-19 (NLT)

11 As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem,

Jesus was heading to Jerusalem. This was not a side comment made by Luke. Jesus had been preparing his disciples for the fact that when they got to Jerusalem, he would be betrayed, arrested, tried, wrongly convicted, beaten and whipped, then crucified. He told them he would die, but said he would be raised from

the dead on the third day. That was back in chapter 9. In Luke 9:51, after telling them what his fate would be, Luke says, “**Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.**”

We have talked about this before. Do you remember the Greek word for “resolutely set out”? It’s *sterizo*, from which we get our word steroids. The idea is that even though Jesus knew what lay ahead, nothing was going to stop him from going to Jerusalem to die for our sins. He knew who he was. He knew his role. He knew he would be the sacrificial Lamb who would take away the sins of the world, and yet he “set his face to go,” as one of the Bible versions translates the Greek word, *sterizo*.

[3 - Map]

Since then, he had been slowly making his way to Jerusalem, stopping in villages along the way, going to the synagogues to teach about the kingdom of God and healing and serving people as they went, all the time knowing what lay ahead of him.

I don’t know about you, but if that was me, I would have been plenty distracted. I can get very distracted by opposition. If I know trouble is brewing I get very preoccupied trying to figure out every way to get myself out of the way of the trouble. Not Jesus. He knew what lay ahead, yet he resolutely set his face to go, and along the way he had encounters with hundreds of people where he reached out and served and loved, even the unlovable.

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he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria.

This is another, seeming, side note that Luke gives. It’s actually not.

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Jesus made his way from his ministry centre in Capernaum in Galilee. He was heading to Jerusalem in the south, which is in Judea. But between Galilee and Judea lay the province of Samaria, where the Samaritans lived. The Samaritans were half Jew and half Gentile. Jews despised them. They called them pigs, which was one of the worst ways to curse someone for a Jew. They were seen as unclean. And, actually, if Jews really wanted to insult someone they would call them a Samaritan. Jesus was having a conversation with some Jewish leaders once. It got a bit heated so they called him a Samaritan devil. When we lived in Calgary, if we wanted to insult someone we would call them an Edmontonian. And, I’m sure they wrongly thought they were insulting others by calling them Calgarians.

Jews and Samaritans had a massive disdain for each other. Jews normally wouldn’t go into Samaria. They would go miles out of their way to avoid Samaritans.

Luke doesn’t say here that Jesus went into Samaria. He simply says they were on the border. But there were other instances where Jesus purposefully went into Samaria, such as when he and his disciples went into the village of Sychar where Jesus met with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. Jesus was not at all put off by Samaritans or any other cultural and religious taboos. As a matter of fact, he seemed to go out of his way to love people who were normally outcast by society.

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12 As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance,

Ten men with leprosy stood at a distance. Why were they standing at a distance? It was actually Levitical law that dictated that they had to remain outside the city to ensure that nobody else contracted the disease from them. So, you have to picture this in your mind. Jesus has a crowd of people following him. His inner circle of disciples are close to him. There are other adoring fans following. These ten lepers knew their place. They were on the outside and they knew it. They stood at a distance,

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13 crying out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

That’s the same thing blind Bartimaeus cried when he found out Jesus was nearby. These men were desperate. They had been outcasts for who knows how long. The only social interaction they had was with

other lepers. They had to be disassociated from their families and friends. They were despised, rejected and disenfranchised, and they knew it.

Here's the interesting thing about leprosy. It is actually a nervous system disease in which the person who has contracted the disease loses the ability to feel pain. If you didn't think too hard about this, you would think that would be a great thing, wouldn't you? I mean, nobody likes pain. We avoid pain. I do. And for good reason. Pain hurts. However, even pain has purpose.

There are noted cases where leprosy patients have had their fingers or toes eaten off by rats while they were sleeping and they didn't know it because they couldn't feel any pain. Pain is a gracious gift of God. Ironically, if we can't feel pain, we can easily get hurt, if that makes sense. Someone with leprosy could put their hand on a red hot burner and not know it. Pain is so important. We learn from pain. It is a gift from God, whether it's physical pain, or emotional pain.

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Pain signals that something is wrong, that a change is needed. Pain is not something we should seek out, of course, but it is certainly something we should pay attention to. It should cause us to call out to Jesus to have mercy on us, to give us direction on what changes we need to make.

So, here we have these ten lepers crying out to Jesus to help them feel pain again. They probably wouldn't have said it like that, but that is really what they needed.

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14 He looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy.

In other cases where Jesus healed people of leprosy he reached out and touched them. He wasn't afraid of their disease. In this case, he calls to them and tells them to go and show themselves to the priest. This is actually a little strange because they would have known that they would not be allowed near the synagogue if they had leprosy. It would have taken a step of faith for them to move towards civilization and especially towards the synagogue. As **they took the step of faith in the authority of Jesus**, they were all healed. Not only did they get feeling back in their body, but all the damage that had been done to them was restored. They were completely cleansed so they could reenter society and worship.

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15 One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, "Praise God!" 16 He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking him for what he had done.

All ten of them were healed. One came back to thank Jesus. This man was so extremely thankful. He was overjoyed. His heart was full. Put yourself into the story. He runs back to Jesus praising God, falls on the ground in front of him and thanks him profusely for healing him completely of the damage leprosy had done to his body and for his ability to feel pain again. I cannot even imagine what that would have been like to be so completely healed of a debilitating disease like that.

I would guess that those of you who have experienced the miraculous healing of God in some way would know a bit what it would feel like, to be given life again. That would be pretty amazing. This man would finally be able to be with his family and loved ones. He would be able to join in all the experiences of community that he had missed out on for however long it was since he had contracted the disease.

Then Luke adds:

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This man was a Samaritan.

Not only was this man shamed by the disease of leprosy, he was also one of the ones the Jews despised. To the Jew of that time, this man was doubly dirty, and yet Jesus didn't push him away. He moved towards

people like this. He was not afraid to associate with the outcasts or the unclean. He made them feel wanted and loved and like they belonged. The Bible says that even prostitutes were welcomed by Jesus. There was nobody Jesus was unwilling to love.

That is what Jesus wants at CRBC as well. Jesus welcomed anyone who authentically moved towards him. We are the body of Christ on earth. We are Jesus with skin on in Campbell River. This means we need to make sure we don't do anything that would give the impression that there are certain types of people who are not welcome at CRBC. Our electronic sign outside says 'Everyone Welcome.' We need to mean that. Everyone is welcome at CRBC no matter what race, religion, colour, gender, or sexual orientation.

A few weeks ago I brought SOGI 123 to your attention. Some of you had not heard of it before. Some of you are involved in standing up against it. Please, whatever you do, make sure you do not give the impression that we are against LGBTQ people. God has enough love and grace for everyone. Please, for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus, remember that you represent him. You are Jesus with skin on. Love and serve those you disagree with or might call 'your enemies.'

There is a Facebook group called 'Campbell River Rant, Rave and Randomness.' It's a group where anybody can post almost anything and rant about it, or rave, or whatever. It's mostly full of toxic vitriolic rants. The only reason I'm on it is because I want to know what people in our city are saying. People are posting about SOGI, and the ugliness on both sides of the argument is terrible. Please, if you are tempted to say or do anything, remember what your mother said. "If you can't be nice, keep your mouth shut." Do not defame the name of Jesus. Do not get distracted from what Jesus has called us to. He has called us to reach out to our community with his love, not stand against everything we disagree with.

I'm not saying you shouldn't say anything. I am saying, be careful. If you have children in the public school system, you should feel free to talk to their teachers gently, kindly and with a loving motive about your views. Engage in dialogue, not debate. Have conversations in which you talk about the issues, not personalities. Ask questions to seek to understand more than preaching at them about your views, or judging them for theirs. Please, for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus, do not build walls so people feel unwelcome at CRBC.

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17 Jesus asked, "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" 19 And Jesus said to the man, "Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you."

It's interesting, all ten men were healed of leprosy. Only the Samaritan came back to thank Jesus. He was healed of his leprosy, but he was still a Samaritan. He would always be a Samaritan. That was who he was and he did not need to be healed of it. Nor did Jesus see him as less because he was Samaritan. Only this Samaritan, an outcast to the Jews, was filled with gratitude.

As followers of Jesus, gratitude, or thankfulness should be one of our defining characteristics. We should practice gratitude. As soon as our eyes open in the morning, before our feet hit the ground, we should begin by saying, "Thank you, Jesus. Thank you for life. Thank you that we get to walk in your authority today. Thank you for saving me. Thank you, Jesus."

One of the things Ruth does to practice thankfulness is keep a gratitude journal. Every day she writes down five things she is thankful for. Unless we are purposeful about being thankful, it can be easy to take a nose dive into the muck and mire of despair.

Did you know that God's will for us is that we would be thankful in all circumstances? It's true.

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1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NLT)

18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

Does that sound unreasonable? It would be if we weren't living under the authority of Jesus. If our lives were just a series of random events with no purpose it would be pretty tough to be thankful when we experience difficult circumstances.

Jesus' brother James said that we could actually face everything with joy, no matter what.

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James 1:2–4 (NLT)

2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

There is nobody here this morning who is immune to pain. Nobody. And we should be thankful we aren't immune, because just like the leper, if we are not able to experience pain we will keep on hurting ourselves and others, sometimes without even knowing it, and we will continue doing damage to our souls and to the souls of others.

Every obstacle, all the pain, each challenge or trial we face is an opportunity to grow our faith. If we lament the fact that we have pain in our lives, we forfeit the opportunity for God to use it for our good and his glory. Even the things in your past that you regret, even that one thing that causes you to feel the most shame, God can use for your good and his glory. I have seen this over and over again in my life and in the lives of others who are willing to face their pain.

I have to remind myself over and over again, when I face opposition, or when things don't go my way, that this is how life is. Pain is a normal part of life.

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1 Peter 4:12–13 (NLT)

12 Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. 13 Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.

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Colossians 3:15–17 (NLT)

15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. 16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. 17 And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

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Philippians 4:4–7 (NLT)

4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! 5 Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. 6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

We are going to celebrate communion now. When we partake of communion together we are celebrating that **we have been healed of something far more serious than leprosy**. Jesus, through his death on the cross, healed us of the sin problem that would keep us from relationship with a holy God. Even when we were still sinners, Jesus died in our place. We were outcasts. He moved towards us.

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We are far more depraved than we can ever know, and far more loved by God than we could ever imagine.

Nothing we have done or will do will make God love us less, and nothing we can do can make God love us any more than he already does.

Jesus resolutely set his face to go to Jerusalem, Luke said, to die for you and me. And here's what the writer of Hebrews says:

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Hebrews 12:2b (NLT)

² Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame.

Jesus modelled the way forward. He did not avoid pain. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross. What joy was awaiting Jesus after the cross? It was the knowledge of what would be accomplished through it. He looked forward with eyes of faith to you and me, knowing that if he died, we could have life. That's love.

No matter what you are going through right now, surrender it to the authority of Jesus and know that God can use it as an opportunity for you to grow to be more like Jesus.

Before we celebrate communion together, I want to read a passage of Scripture in which God, through Paul describes to us God's plan regarding the authority of Christ that he is accomplishing through his death and resurrection.

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Ephesians 1:3–11 (NLT)

³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. ⁴ Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.

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⁵ God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. ⁶ So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. ⁷ He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.

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⁸ He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹ God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. ¹⁰ And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.

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¹¹ Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.