



One Page Sermon

By Rev. Robb McCoy

September 15, 2024

Compassion

Recap of sermon from September 15, 2024

Scripture: Isaiah 11:6-9

The subtitle of this week—"The Polarization Within," might seem absurd at first. I understand polarization. We talked about it a lot last week. There are dozens of studies and examples of how we are becoming more polarized—in Congress, in communities, and even in our families. Yet I seldom consider myself to be polarized.

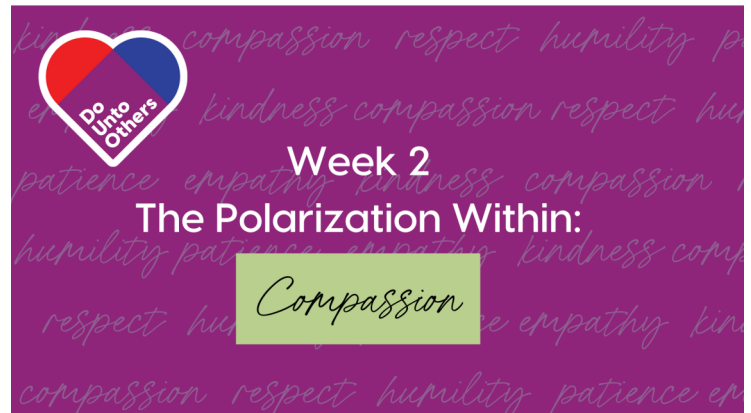
Then I drove by a sign advertising a Prayer Breakfast hosted by a prominent politician. This is a politician with whom I vehemently disagree on most issues. I thought to myself, "Ugh, why would I want to go pray with those people," and boom, I was convicted by my own polarization within. How can I preach about kindness overcoming differences when my first reaction to a prayer breakfast is disgust?

I have examined the group that is sponsoring the event, and I still have deep convictions in opposition to them. Yet, is it possible to still come together to pray? While our inner prayers will likely be very different, can I find something that unites us? I have not decided if I will attend the event, but my thoughts about praying with "those people" reveals what "Polarization Within" might mean.

Many have labeled me "one of those people." For many years I have advocated vocally for the inclusion of LGBTQ people in full leadership in the United Methodist Church. This work has earned me a label by many as "one of those people." I wear the label proudly, but I also wonder what I might be missing if we only see each other as labels.

It reminded me of a lyric in one of my favorite songs, "Crack the Case," written by Taylor Goldsmith. It is a song about people coming together across differences. The first verse is about how it feels like we are all playing a big game of "telephone" the old party game where the original message is obscured everytime by the difficulties of communication. The first verse ends with the idea that "I want to sit with my enemies and say we should have done this sooner. While I look them in the face. Maybe that will crack the case."

The song continues with different examples of the harm done when we miscommunicate or fail to consider the "other's" perspective. In the last verse, he sings,



Now that we're through with formalities

What is it you wanna ask of me?

I'll answer open and honestly

Whatever that means

Finding out that we occupy

Somebody else's opposing side

On the banks of some great divide

Two versions of a dream

When we find out that we occupy someone else's opposing side, maybe we can start to understand each other better. The promise of Isaiah is that wolf will lie down with the lamb. And we all think of ourselves as the lamb. Perhaps the promise of Isaiah is that we can stop trying to be wolves.

With some compassion—which is the heart of Jesus ministry—we can see what someone else might be experiencing, and stop the blame game. Compassion means literally "gut moving," and it occurs only when we can feel deeply for someone else. Jesus' compassion moved him to feed crowds, heal the blind, and raise a widow's son. Compassion is the start of healing. It is the ability to see someone else beyond their label, and it is something I need to consider when I ponder attending that event.

Taylor also sings, "It's really hard to hate anyone when you know what they've been through." I encourage you to look up the lyrics to this song and find a clip of him singing it. There are a couple of different versions on youtube and a link will be included in our weekly email.

Next Week: Humility
Ephesians 4:1-6