

Creating Possibility: Learning to Live "As If!"

Theme Development during Lent

Please bring to worship: 6 strips of paper and a container or clip in which to keep them throughout Lent and Easter.

On Feb 28, we began: So, the question is: Can we live creating possibility? Can we live "as if", "even though?" Will I live what I believe knowing I have everything already within me? ...do I even believe that?

It's a tough world out there. There are huge divides, false divisions and dichotomies. We live at time that pressures us into extremes which invite no self-reflection or nuance: democrat or republican, racist or anti-racist, teachers/families, socialism for the rich/socialism for the poor, child/adult.

What do I believe?

We don't and the world doesn't grow when our efforts center on convincing ourselves or others by being a logic bully...about faith or anything else, for that matter. Bullying doesn't convince...it denigrates through fear and intimidation. Rather, growth happens when we come alongside to understand needs and motivations...our own and that of others and then reflect that back. ...like holding up a mirror so we can see our own thoughts or they theirs...more clearly.

And, you won't be successful if doing this as a way to manipulate to get the predetermined outcome you want. It

must come from a genuine desire to understand motivations and deeply listening to help each other assess and appreciate intentions and goals...rather than change them...it's not a discussion. Maybe in so doing, a re-evaluating of a chosen means to chosen end/goal happens.

Start by focusing on yourself: Ask yourself how your preferred approach might work in practice vs as you assume. Play it out looking for complexities.

With others: Well, first you have to be with others...reminds me of Pat sharing about the Trump supporters that shoveled out a Democrat's driveway without expectation and left her confused and us asking, "Is this all it takes to begin something new?"

In coming along side someone in a caring, thoughtful way: Hear them into speech listening to understand rather than respond. Rather than try to convince them of anything or ask them why, ask them to play out their approach to demonstrate how that would work. Let them discover complexities or wrinkles in their thinking. Then, as they see for themselves, they may adjust those means to their desired end.

It comes down to putting on your oxygen mask first before helping others. Understanding yourself first, so you can live "as if." So you can honestly say "Even though.... I believe... and so I choose to act according to my faith and not the circumstance.

It is not my job/role to change others, it's my job to look at myself and change, save me...putting things in the right order. I will live my life forward. I will live an 'As If Life' now!" For the new realm is here! I will create possibility.

It comes down to understanding myself. It comes down to understanding someone vs changing someone. The rest is up to them. And it necessitates me being humble...letting go of my own fear and guilt enough so...I can think.

So how to then how to bring possibility? Again, not by logic bullying disguised as discussion. Not by making someone feel bad about themselves or have to defend themselves. Not when what you are questioning is connected to the fabric of the other's identity, lodged in community, friendships, and faith. More on this next week...

On March 7, we added: Last week we said, you can't open up "possibility" (convince anyone of anything) by making them feel bad about themselves. ...by questioning the fabric of their identity which is lodged in culture, community, friendships, and faith. Think of it this way: it's like they're sitting atop this huge elephant of identity which doesn't change course easily. Each of us is a rider on an elephant of self-identity.

The rider part of you is your conscious verbal reasoning, logical thinking self of which we are often aware. The elephant represents all that has formed our identity (99% of which we are not

aware). The elephant is powerful and a lot more formidable than the rider.

So, first of all, if we want to stay on the Way...live "as if" in the realm, we need to know our own elephants first...what is truly guiding our subconscious reactions and affecting how we think and where we will go and won't go!

And, to convince or persuade someone else, speak to their elephant, not the rider...for it is the elephant that has the power to control which direction its rider is going to go. If the elephant likes you, is beginning to hear and trust you, it is more likely it will move in your direction and persuade the rider to go along.

To do this, you need to come close enough to the other riders to know their elephants...by their first names so to speak. But...no discussion, no logic bullying ...listening. Ride alongside. Let our elephants kiss and discover nuances and ramifications and play things out differently in their minds and so, maybe affecting their end destinations! To help do this, maybe try speaking "as if" the world and our God were listening to each word you speak to those elephants. Ah...the art of persuasion.

Let's listen this week to the first half of this video on the art of persuasion

(3:41):

<https://youtu.be/24adApYhoyc>

So focus a moment on your own elephant...

What is the mouse...that frightens your elephant? ...so then, the elephant runs

away with you? Stampedes? Is your mouse: immigration, voting rights, poverty? Are these the mice that cause your elephant to stampede over your ability to listen to yourself or anyone else?

Remember: our mice are formed by, have a diet of our fears, guilt, and past experience

BTW, You know, if we ride our elephants all the way to Jerusalem, nose to nose, with a, our elephants gets smaller and the cross you carry gets lighter on the Way...you heart opens wide. (And, I'd rather be trampled by turtles than elephants. That's a music joke!)

On March 14, we added: Last week we used a metaphor: Elephants, riders...and mice! Today let's explore more about those elephants of the subconscious which our logical selves sit atop.

We'll continue to listen to Jon Haidt as he speaks about "morality markers"...we might name that differently for our purposes. He uses these markers to speak of the divisions of republicans, democrats, and libertarians. An example helpful to us as this is a key topic of conversation right now. But I invite you to think in broader terms.

Jonathan Haidt - Listen to video starting on **3:53**.
<https://youtu.be/24adApYhoyc>

Here are the markers that shape how we become who we are...form the elephant

on which our rational minds ride: Care, Fairness, Loyalty, Authority, Sanctity, and Liberty.

He says Libertarians have strong system thinking capabilities but weak on empathy. So, they have a harder time relating to others but are extremely good thinkers on problems. We need them...their elephants in our herd. ...each other's herds.

So how do you persuade them...someone to come alongside?

First, acknowledge them just the way they are...see their elephants as real.

And be aware of how you approach that elephant!

Are you in combat mode or discovery mode or relationship mode?

If our thing is to get into a discussion, that's usually combat mode, bullying with logic. And so, the other goes into defensive mode.

But when we come alongside in curious mode or relationship mode, others tend to open up. MLK said, "It's hard to hate someone when you know their stories."

When you come alongside to listen instead of convince, the elephants are more likely to move toward each other.

But ultimately, the most important aspect of coming alongside, elephant to elephant, is for their riders to embrace humility (get the right size).

...allowing ourselves to revisit our thinking to examine any faulty thinking,

acknowledging that we *can* understand certain points made or have had a shared experience, modeling in ourselves what we would like to see in them i.e. Self-doubt, a willingness to rethink.

Ultimately more humility is key is in connecting. No one of us has it “right.” Together we are so much more “wise.” ...as in wisdom circles!

Key to initiating a cognitive reframing of issues...humble listening, curious to understand, a sharing of experiences, building relationship.

Another way to say this is: be compassionate.
“No one cares how much you know till they know how much you care.” Teddy Roosevelt.

Sara shared it this way this week...the ability to show compassion for another is represented in the difference between these two approaches when your partner forgets your birthday.

My partner forgot my birthday. They don't love me. VS
Someone I love forgot my birthday.

Can you hear the difference...feel it in yourself?

No one wants their elephant to stampede...mice or not!
We all want to caravan.

On March 21, we added:
Living as if is one step beyond reimagining.

Elephants, riders, mice, snakes...alrighty then.

No discussions, no being logic bullies.
Humility is key.

Modeling that which we hope to see in the other...let me think about that, tell me more. Staying in curious mode.

We do sorta' get it. How to live in such a divisive world...how to live as if even though. We get it in our brains but how do we get it into our bones?

First, you have to imagine the world you want to live in...what it is you are hoping for?

Have to imagine how the realm of God looks in daily life and take one step beyond imagining.

What are the little things and what are the big things around which our choices either build up the realm or tear it down?

What is the message of hope you are looking for today?

Imagine hope.
How would you need “to be” more than need “to do”... in order to live into the realm you imagine?

Here are some rules of thumb “to be you” in the new realm...a new diet for your elephant and a new way to think about things as rider...
some skills to go beyond imagining:

1. Beware of seeing villains, victims, or angels in a system. It generally means you're “hooked.” If anyone is always wrong or right, you are probably not seeing them clearly.
2. Systems resist change. Remember that you must plan your change, predict the system's reaction and plan for it, and respond to the system's reaction.
3. Running head on into resistance will probably intensify it.
4. Never attack, never defend. When you feel the need to do either of these, you are “hooked.”
5. There is no point taking an I-Position or talking loci to a system in emotional turmoil.
6. Humor may be the best way to detoxify a tense issue.
7. Plan your timing, your context, and your strategy for change and keep your own counsel.
8. Distinguish between planned and reactive distance. The first gives you perspective, while the second is likely to interfere with your progress.
9. Let go of stubbornly held issues. Reversing your long-held stance may teach you something about the inflexibilities of your system.
10. Use the intensity of your reactions (anger or hurt) as signals that important issues are at stake.
11. Silence doesn't fool an emotional system. Your silence may be interpreted in a variety of ways: as consent, disagreement, loyalty, or rebellion. Not communicating is also a communication.
12. Do not be discouraged by backsliding. Under enough stress we all revert to old patterns. Hopefully we don't stay in them as long.
13. When you find yourself too ready to work on anyone else's relationships (e.g. your spouse's family), look at what you may be avoiding in your own.
14. Never remain with your family or any conversation longer than you can afford to be generous.

15. Lower your expectations for other people changing to 0, and you'll probably be pleasantly surprised.
16. Make your responses unpredictable, which is different from being unreliable.
17. If no family members are available, try making a relationship with our worst enemy.
18. Beware of believing any rule of thumb too strongly.

This week, we add:

Remember where we started...

Elephants, riders, mice, snakes...alrighty then.

No discussions, no being logic bullies. Humility is key.

Modeling that which we hope to see in the other...let me think about that, tell me more.

Staying in curious mode. Living as if is one step beyond reimagining.

Last week, we started to reflect on some wisdom for daily living...18 thumb nails from Bowen Friedman Theory and we will resume after we examine how it is we are to be By-Standers...

maybe that's how not to be bystanders in this divisive world. How often our eyes glaze over and we freeze not because we don't care but because we don't know what to do.

In Leviticus 17, Adonai says: Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor. Engage for justice. Keep an eye on that which is important. The eyes are the windows to our souls. When we live our lives seeing with our souls...living as if even though...loving our neighbor comes naturally and all we need are some skills!

Bystander Intervention training focuses on ways to intervene in public instances of racist, sexist, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic, anti-Trans, and other forms of oppressive interpersonal violence and harassment while considering the safety of all parties.

The physical and vocal practice of various strategies is designed to change social norms and encourage people to find ways to interrupt violence and prevent further harm.

I sent you an email about an on-line By-Stander training...I am attending a session...please attend a session...email me if you need the link again or google it! I am just going to highlight the contents of a training.

How Can I Intervene?

Stepping in can look like a lot of different things:

- telling a friend that you find their language offensive
- leaving a party early with a friend who is intoxicated to make sure they arrive home safely
- asking someone to go to the bathroom together so you can check in
- safely intervene when you sense injustice about to happen or happening

Bystander Intervention teaches five basic steps:

1. Notice the event
2. Interpret the situation as a problem
3. Assume personal responsibility
4. Know how to help
5. Show up in the moment!

Tips for Intervening Safely

- Consider which intervention style is best:
 - **Direct**—directly interacting with the people involved. But not engaging in dialogue or arguing but rather to decrease anxiety and physical defensiveness. Keep it short. Including **Delay** which is checking in with the person to be supportive after the stressing encounter and offering to assist by accompanying.
 - **Indirect—Delegate**, asking others to intervene on your behalf, such as calling 911, or be a non-threatening distance away and film to **Document**
 - **Distract**—creating a diversion to diffuse the situation. Like saying this phone call is for you, did someone order pizza?
- Be aware of safety; never put yourself in harm's way.
- Intervene early, if you can, before the problem becomes a crisis.

Remain calm while gathering information and providing the support you can.

So, think on this:

I pray I do not stand idly by when:_____.

Our Christian humanity calls us to come forward for we are not innocent bystanders!
Thumb Nails 10-18...will help us find our way to be present in the moment differently.
Write in on the palm of your hand!

“Our Passion’s Prompting...Wisdom For The Living Of Each Day”

Based upon Mark 14:1 - Mark 15:47

August 8, 2021

Rerun of Palm Sunday March 28, 2021

“Telling The Story...Backwards To The Future”

Please bring paper, pencil, and scissors...and communion elements.

**#1 Wisdom Teaching: Mark 15: 16-24, 33, 37-41,
45-47 “The Crucifixion and Burial”**

Reflection: “The Gift of Vigil”

Looking on from a distance were the women who had traveled with Him and provided for Him.....

following Him in word and deed.

How terrifying and gruesome that scene must have been!

His pain must have been as palpable as the morning dew
or the noon day’s darkness.

How unbearable...and yet they stayed!
They stood vigil with him right through his pain.

What a gift to him their presence must have been!

I can only imagine how their hearts held his in those hours...how they were moved...
their inward movement in that moment...holding him!

And I wonder what gift their vigil brought to them as well.
There is a gift in standing vigil through someone’s pain...
a deep gift that goes beyond the moment and changes lives.

God is standing vigil in our lives transforming our pain.

And it’s your turn.

How are you being called to stand vigil to someone’s pain...the pain of the world...how
are we to be by-standers knowing what we now know?

Is there some way we might be able to do more than vigil or march...be co-conspirators? Put our bodies between them and theirs to stand with instead of by stand?

#2 Wisdom Teaching: Mark 15: 1-15 “The Release of Barabbas”

Reflection: “Given A Second Chance”

Jesus engages Pilot but won't take the bait to defend himself. He knows he won't be able to convince Pilot of anything he is not already willing to believe.

Can't logic bully with the king of bullying

As we hear this part of the story, our thoughts are usually drawn to the jealousy of the priests

and the fickleness of the crowd
and the deepening betrayal.

But this morning, I ask you to be with Barabbas.

What must have been going on within him as he heard Pilate's words and the shouts of the crowd?

If he were indeed guilty of the crimes of which he was accused, how must he have felt to be released to a second chance for life...

especially when the one taking his place was the Holy One of Israel....King of the Jews?
Has someone ever taken the rap for you?

Have you ever wanted a second chance thinking

“I would do better if I only had a second chance?
If I knew then what I know now, I would have
done it differently. I would have been there.”

You have wanted a second chance,
and...like Barabbas...you are receiving one even as we worship together this morning.

Given a second chance, how will you use it?

#3 Wisdom Teaching: Mark 14: 27-31 “The Betrayal and Denial”

Call to Confession:

Often truth is twisted and justice denied...not only in the big sweeps of the world, but in the small strokes of our lives.

In our betrayals and denials and desertions we are called to confess...to share our humanness with our God so we can live into grace/claim our do-over.

This is a small thing, yet of great courage.
Calming voices within. Learning to live as if even though...

Confession is a huge movement within drawing us out.
Any and all movement is challenging.

And so we have this time set aside for us to name our challenge with God...our humanness with our God...and to listen for God's support found deep within the movements of each of our souls.

Lent is a time to discover new ways "to be" our more authentic selves.

Our prayer of confession is based upon today's Palm Sunday story and the story of the bystanders in Holy Week. In our common voice, let us lift silently our individual, passion-stirred, hope-full stories, praying:

Prayer of Confession: (Based upon Mark 11: 1-11 - The Palm Sunday Story and our theme)

We listen to the crowds, at first cheering and enthusiastically shouting, "Hosanna", then crying out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

We recognize our own shifting loyalties or lack of courage, the ease with which we can be swayed.

O God, help us find our courageous hearts when we are tempted to give in to the powers that be or the crowd around us, instead of standing up in integrity with You.

We are not innocent bystanders...for we know how the story ends. We are Easter People of Faith.

It is so difficult for us to respond sensitively and appropriately to real needs that surround us...our own need and the needs of others.

Help us stay the course of this week full of passion. To follow the ways of Jesus using words wisely, showing up for justice, listening compassionately. To hold on to our integrity as the way to live as if even though.

May we incarnate engaged love and grace as best we can. May we embody a deep soul trust that the Realm of God here and now!

✧Our Assurance of God's Love With Us: "I Am Willing"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnmRoNeezWA>

#4 Wisdom Teaching: Mark: 14: 22-25 "The Communion Meal"

Reflection: "Sacred Sharing"

Even in the midst of the pending betrayal of his friends,
Jesus stays invested in the lives of each of those gathered around him...
indeed the lives of all the world's people.

He shares a meal with them...

he shares his last supper and our first communion with us
offering them a new vision of God's covenant with an expanding table of welcome to
the least of these.

Yet, in choosing bread as body and wine as blood, he lets us know that to follow in the
ways of justice, our very body and blood may be broken and poured out.

In the bread, symbolized is our brokenness...our being broken open by life to
possibility...and our basic needs met.

In the wine symbolized, the value, depth, fullness of life received. Life energy poured
out.

Jesus is about to be broken and pour himself out...share of himself with them and the
world in ways
no one could even begin to imagine

...this sacred sharing pours out endless possibilities for new life for each of us. We are
no longer bystanders.

For whatever happens to the least of these happens to "me."

Our God loves us enough to do this depth sacred sharing with each one of us.

It's personal. It's for everyone! Praise be to our God!

✧Our Agape Meal Together✧

Let Us Break Bread Together

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Egk-pX_1nHg

#5 Wisdom Teaching: Mark 14:3-9 “The Anointing”

Reflection: “Celebrating Extravagance”

Just the smell of the nard must have been in stark contrast to the dusty smell of life out in the streets.

And how special,
she would not only have come to anoint him with her loving faith, but move close to him...

was amazingly personal with him.

In her anointing was not only the extravagance of the expense of the gift, but the extravagance of her love...

despite what was going on in her life, knowing the poverty of the world...

and knowing just throwing money at unjust situations won't help...*that's* why the poor are always with us!

Our systems don't address the underlying needs, rather covers them up meeting immediate needs.

And so often we walk right by those in need without even making eye contact.

Only a shared, lived justice with the poor and oppressed, putting our bodies next to theirs, following their lead, can change things, re-shape realities...even though...

Oh...she was extravagant!

Despite the conservative wisdom of the world to save for a rainy day...she let her love rain down on Jesus.

We can only imagine how Jesus benefited by the extravagance of her love... what shifted/moved within him...opened within him allowing him to move closer to Passion Week.

And this is the question this story asks each of us:

Is there someone who needs
your extravagant love right now?

The story invites you to anoint them with your resources ...show up with them and witness solidarity in your relationship by staying alongside.

#6 Wisdom Teaching: Mark 11:1-10 “The Procession”

Reflection: The Paradox of His Entrance and Our Expectations

Just like the crowds that gathered that day long ago, Christians all over the world gather today waving palms

and celebrating the long awaited arrival of our new King into the city of Jerusalem.

Excited, for Jesus came to right what was wrong with the world.

Just like those gathered over 2000 years ago,
we still wish our King to fix what is wrong with the world with some magnificent stroke
of action...

how often we crucify our leaders when they don't deliver what we want the way we
want it!

we still fail to realize that he came to make this world magnificent

by offering to heal what is broken within *each of us*...

staying by our side in suffering and with compassion always.

Wanting us to do the same for others.

God knows this changes the world and powerfully so!

It is the only way the world can be changed...

one person at a time.

And so we start this week as a celebration,

but we get something *quite different* than we might expect from the unfolding stories of
Passion Week.

What a paradox!

The Realm Jesus offers us is found in resisting
what is wrong in this world...standing up for what is just...
even unto the demise of our comfort levels and safe bubbles.

We come alongside each other no longer innocent bystanders but informed Standing
By-ers!

The paradox is that in our resistance and seeming defeat,

we win over our souls and begin to create a just and so peaceful realm one person at a
time...and powerfully so!

As we worshiped you felt all the feelings of the week as the lectionary honored the whole of the story.

We end in a much different feel tone than we began...

and realize the story doesn't end until we move through Easter morning...

but there is no way to the resurrection without going through the cross first!

But for now, palms in hand, we anticipate what is to come next Sunday!

Even though....I believe....

I choose to live as if....