

McCabe United Methodist Church

May 6, 2018

Psalm 51:1-17

The Cat in the Hat: Life is Messy

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Good Morning Church!

As we wrap up our series considering God's divine purpose for each of our lives, we are beginning a time exploring Scripture using some of the Dr. Seuss stories to help proclaim the Scripture.

Remember the Dick and Jane reading books? Run Dick Run. See Jane Run. Go Jane Go. They didn't always have the most compelling story lines. In part, Seuss wrote because he was convinced that learning to read could be fun and engaging.

I share this, in part, as a caution. The Dr. Seuss readers are light, fun, engaging readers. Even so, this series we begin today has the potential to challenge us. This Dr. Seuss series, if we're willing, has the potential to help us wrestle with our faith.

Let's Pray...

Holy and Mighty God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations on each of our hearts be acceptable in your sight. You are our Rock. You are our Redeemer. Amen.

Remember the cat in the hat? It's a rainy day. Mom is out. The kids ask: What should we do? And then there he is wiping his feet on the mat, and there he was that Cat in the Hat. Pretty soon, things started to get interesting. Pretty soon, things started to get messy. That little fish, the voice of reason...now look what you did said the fish to the cat. Now look at this house! Look at this! Look at that! You sank our toy ship, sank it deep in the cake. You shook up our house and you bent our new rake. You SHOULD NOT be here when mother is not. You get out of this house! Said the fish in the pot. That's just a snippet. That Cat in the Hat.

That Cat's just looking to have some fun. He's just wanting to give the kids what they want. It was his dreams, his desires, his impulses. And the cat was liking it. But the kids were torn. The kids were fretting yet intrigued. Then the uneasiness, it was increasing. It's not something they'd want mom to see. Life can be messy, can't it?

That is where David in this morning's Scripture was. His desires. His imagination. His impulses. He'd gone too far. He'd not only lusted after Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. He'd used his power as king to have an affair with her. It's a #MeToo moment isn't it? Someone in power, using their power, to assault and control someone else.

His way of dealing with it was to set up Uriah, to get rid of Uriah. Uriah was Bathsheba's husband. Uriah was honorable and faithful and loyal. He was David's loyal soldier. Uriah was set up to be killed in battle so David could cover up his own

wrong doings. David had made a mess out of things. He'd gone too far, but he was the king. He thought he'd get by with it. That is, until the Prophet Nathan called him out. It's all laid out in 2nd Samuel chapters 12-13.

Nathan lured David into the story saying: There was this unfaithful guy. He used people and he manipulated people. He used and manipulated people to get what he wanted. The story continued... David was getting more and more appalled. David was seething with anger at the man, and then, the Prophet Nathan pulled the carpet out from David saying: You are THAT MAN!!

David didn't run from it. David owned it. David confessed saying: I have sinned against the Lord.

Now this is where today's Psalm comes in. David's inner house is a mess. The great king is broken and filled with disgust at himself. He knows he did wrong. He approaches God. He pleads with God... saying God I'm broken. I've caused great pain. I've made a terrible mess here. I've sinned against you Lord.

Can you hear it? Can you feel it? David cries out to God:
Psalm 51:

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
because of your unfailing love.
I've messed up. Blot out the stain of my sins.*
- ² Wash me clean from my guilt.
Purify me from my sin.*
- ³ I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night.
⁵ I was born a sinner—you desire honesty and wisdom from me.
⁷ Purify me from my sins. Wash me, make me whiter than snow.*
- ⁸ God give me back my joy again;
⁹ Don't keep looking at my sins.
Remove the stain of my guilt.*
- ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Put a new and right spirit within me.
Create a clean heart in me
God of grace and mercy
God of power and cleansing.
Create in me a clean heart O God...
So forgiven and healed I can rejoice and find joy again.*
- ¹¹ God don't take your Holy Spirit from me.
While I deserve to be banished from your presence, I need your Holy Spirit.
Without the Holy Spirit I lose true power and protection.
Without the Holy Spirit I lose goodness and healing and forgiveness.
Create in me a clean heart O God and I will witness to the difference you make in my life.*

Can you relate to David at all? Maybe messing up big time, or maybe messing up in small, ongoing ways. Rediscovering your need for God's mercy and grace. Repenting and cleaning up our hearts. Life can be messy...Create a clean heart in me O God and put a new and a right spirit in me.

In our region of the country, we've quickly moved from winter to spring. Locally we've just come through spring cleanup week. We accumulate stuff. Some of the stuff is just junk. Some of it gets broken or used up or isn't needed any more. It can start to clutter and crowd our lives. It can slowly drag us down. It can be a great feeling to get things cleaned up and sorted out and make space. It's not always easy. It can take some blood, sweat, and maybe even some tears. Yet when we finally get it done, it can feel like a breath of fresh air. We might sigh a breath of relief, getting things cleaned up and cleaned out can be well worth the effort.

In many ways, that's what we're talking about in our spiritual lives this morning. Life can get messy...It might be time for a spring cleaning. It might be time to take stock of what's going on in our lives. Some of these things might be good, and maybe, if we're honest, there are areas where some spring cleaning could make a difference. There are some things needing to be cleaned up, replaced or thrown out.

An author with Proverbs 31 ministries writes: Cleaning is something most of us prefer to avoid, yet it's necessary. (Life can be messy). When it comes to cleaning house or our garages, the more we neglect doing what is needed, the worse things get. The harder and longer it can take to get things cleaned up again. That can be the case with our closets and our windows. That can be the case with our yards and our cars.

This can be the case with our hearts and our lives too. Our hearts and our lives get messy and cluttered too. On the outside we can look like we have it all together and in order, but on the inside, our hearts can get full of clutter.

The clutter can build up. Clutter like not being willing to forgive or clinging to bitterness and resentment. Clutter like self-condemnation, or judging others can create a mess in our hearts. Our hearts can get messy and cluttered with defensiveness, or sadness, or arrogance and pride, or a lack of joy, or greed or worry or self-pity, or...you fill in the blank. The clutter builds up and it creates a growing mess behind the closed doors of our hearts.

Friends, I don't know about you, but sometimes I wonder if I might spend more time cleaning the outside of my car than I do cleaning up the clutter messing up my heart. What does God see when God examines your heart? When God looks at our hearts, what does God see?

Let's pray:

Create in me a clean heart O God. Don't take your Holy Spirit from me. Instead, put a new and right Spirit in me. Dear Lord, we seek Your face. We come to the table asking that you might restore in us clean hearts. Help us to rid the clutter in our hearts, clutter

that is keeping You at a distance from us. Clutter that is preventing us from seeing you. Clutter that is pushing back against You working through us. As we prepare to go into the day and the days ahead, infuse a new and right Spirit within us. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.