

“Do Over – Radical Forgiveness”

Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 15:11-32

April 14, 2024

Do Over

- This is the last week of the series; I'll begin something new next week.
- This series has worked from the idea that, on frequent occasions, the church of Jesus Christ has gotten things wrong.
 - o Gotten OFF TRACK for lack of better words.
 - o It's missed its calling.
- I think we're in one of those times presently.
 - o The church is failing and we need to get a sense as to why.
- Hence the idea of DO OVERS.
 - o We need one, here in this church, in the church more broadly, and we need one ourselves, personally.
- To that end, I've told you stories of my personal failures in ministry as the means to open us up more broadly to this idea.
 - o That pastors and priests don't always have things, right?
 - o That what more than anything else we need to grow a church, to grow the church, is people having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - o So, let's have a Do Over, shall we?

My Mistake – Misreading the Times

- I was at my first Bible school at a church.
 - o Somehow, I'd missed the one at Myers Park and this was my first ever time helping with VBS.
- We had a lot of kids that year – over 60.
 - o There were so many, we really cramped into the fellowship hall with all the tables out. We were really too cramped.
 - o But they'd finally gotten the kids to settle down.
 - They needed to get them into their groups.
- But I decided they needed to play a game with me, making a thunderstorm.
 - o Anyway, long story short, I got this whole large group of children in an absolute frenzy just as the real leaders needed them to settle down and be focused.
- I misread the room.
- We all do it from time to time.
 - o Look at data, form an opinion and then move on from there.
 - o But, sometimes, we didn't look closely enough or, worse still, we just assumed we knew what we were talking about at the time.
 - o This surely happened in a great many churches during the Civil Rights Era in the USA.

The Church's Failure – Segregation and Civil Rights

- As I've been showing you, collectively, the church gets things wrong a lot of the time and people suffer.
- One great incident of this occurred during the Civil Rights Era.
 - o Yes, some churches did very robustly support this movement away from segregation.
 - o But you know what, MANY did not.
 - o Many stayed put with their previous assumptions that the way the world was working was perfectly all right.
 - Never mind that there were ample scriptures that could've shown that segregation was an utterly un-Christian concept.
 - But instead, some churches heard about the “Curse of Ham” and the need to stay separate from the uncleanness of other races.
 - o It was nutty times.
- You see, we get things wrong.

The Prodigal Son

- There's someone in our story that gets things wrong, isn't there?
- Well, that's for sure, two to be sure.
 - o The first brother's failure we all know and see played out for us.
 - This impudent young man goes to his dad and essentially says, "dad, you're dead to me, give me my stuff."
 - WRONG but, you know what, he comes to his senses.
- The Younger Brother
 - o Comes to his senses
 - o Is embraced
 - o Radical forgiveness
- Great news of the story
 - o God really forgives us.
 - o God really embraces us back fully, there is no diminishment of our status because we've been sinners.
 - God LOVES us that much.
 - He really forgives us.
- But there is also some bad news.
 - o Some people will take this amazingly good reconciliation and feel somehow strangely BAD about it.
 - Like they've somehow lost out not doing freely what they want.
- So, what's the deal with this older brother.
 - o He is works based righteousness, 100%.
- Notice his words
 - o This son (not my brother) and how it's all about the good things he's done.
 - He's expecting more because he's done more good.
 - We do that too, don't we sometimes?
- The elder brother
 - o Is resentful that God is full of Grace?
 - o Don't we all get like that, sometimes?
 - I know I do, on occasion.
- What the elder brother got wrong.
 - o Even though he might have been doing better, he was still doing things wrong.
 - He is still a sinner.
 - But he's still wanting his stuff more than relationship with his father.
- How are we doing on that front?
 - o Do we understand that even though we're here, in church, that we ourselves are the ones out of whack with God?
 - That's right? It isn't about what other people are doing wrong, it's about what's wrong inside of our own hearts.
- The first step in our relationship with Christ is us seeking a do over.
 - We go to God, confess our shortcomings, asking for Him to come into our lives.
- Then, the next step is growing in His love and grace so that we can share it with others.
 - o That's right, our end, is to let other people know the good news.
 - That we're forgiven. Loved by God, no matter what.