***Shiloh United Methodist Church***

Acts 2:43-47 Rev. Tyler Amundson April 18, 2021

***Do I have to make my bed?***

How do you wake up in the morning?

Maybe you’re like me –

you wake slowly –

hit the snooze,

stretch a little bit,

Think about getting up to work out,

scroll Instagram or Facebook,

stretch a little bit more.

Fall back to sleep for the 30 minutes you were going to work out in.

Maybe you’re the

“straight up and out” type –

right to the shower

or the coffee pot

or to take care of

other urgent bodily needs.

Whoever we are –

whether a kindergartener

or a head of state –

we all have that moment

right at the beginning of the day –

where we sit up,

pajamas rumpled,

morning hair –

morning breath.

Soon we’ll put on our identities –

parent, teacher,

doctor, therapist,

business person,

liberal, conservative,

serious, fun-loving - -

but for a moment,

we just are.

What do we do with that moment –

before the world begins –

do we let it linger?

do we move quickly on?

I heard an interview once

with U.S. Senator Cory Booker –

it must have been

toward the end

or toward the beginning

of a new year,

because the interviewer asked him

about something

he’d learned over the past year

that had made an impact

on his life.

His response was surprising.

He said,

“making my bed.”

I will admit,

I’ve always been one to think

that making your bed in the morning

was stupid.

A waste of time.

You’re just going to

undo the bed again

at the end of the day –

so why bother –

apart from having guests

or clean sheet day –

what is the point?

Rarely –

in the years since

my allowance depended on it –

have I made my bed

without some good reason

for doing it.

Incidentally,

One of my friend’s brother, when they were growing up–

enterprising youth that he was,

discovered a work-around

for the allowance-dependent bed-making chore

wherein he would simply

sleep on top

of his already made bed

and straighten up the sheets

in the morning.

Genius.

I wondered what

the ratio of bed-makers

to non-bed-makers was

in the world in general,

so this past week

I asked folks on Facebook

about their bed-making habits –

if they did or didn’t make the bed,

and why yes or why no.

I have to say,

I was surprised by

how many responses I got –

people have real opinions

on making the bed.

Or maybe I should say –

people who make their beds

have real opinions –

like enthusiastic, positive opinions –

about making the bed.

Like some folks said –

not unlike Senator Booker –

that it has

*changed their lives*.

Not everyone was that dramatic,

lots of people said

that they make the bed

because they like their room

to feel tidy and neat.

Some said they liked

having that space available

to work or fold clothes

or play with kids.

Several folks mentioned

the word “calm” –

that making the bed

made them feel calm.

One person said

that if she’s had a crazy day

she’ll make the bed

before getting into it

to go to sleep

because it feels

good and calming

to get into a

made up bed.

Another person said

the rest of her day

will feel chaotic

if she hasn’t made the bed

when she gets up.

Similarly,

lots of folks talked about

how making the bed first thing

starts the day of well –

it’s getting something accomplished

right off the bat.

That’s what Senator Booker

said too - -

it’s not as much

the finished product

of the made bed

as it is the process - -

one of the people

who answered my question on Facebook

said she even makes the bed

in hotels –

because it’s about the discipline,

the routine,

the ritual.

We humans are creatures of routine.

Annie Dillard once said,

“how we spend our days is,

of course,

how we spend our lives.”

We don’t wake up every day

and form a way of being in the world

from scratch.

We don’t make decisions

about every little thing

that we do or don’t do - -

we retrace our steps,

we retrace our patterns.

What we do,

our daily practices and habits

are what shape and form us

into who we are

and how we are in the world.

The author Tish Harrison Warren

says that our habits and patterns

“shape our loves, our desires,

and ultimately who we are and what we worship.”

Often we don’t even really think about it –

like the way that fish

don’t think about water

because it’s all around them –

we often don’t notice

the ways that these patterns work in our lives –

and the ways that we’ve absorbed them –

from our families,

from our experiences,

from our culture - -

these things we do over and over

that sink their way into our bones

and teach us who we are.

How we spend our days

is how we spend our lives.

We have routines and habits

in the church too –

of course,

*we* have to have

a churchy word for it,

so we don’t call it “routines,”

we call it liturgy –

the repeated patterns

of praise, repentance, and faith

that teach us about ourselves

and about God.

Different churches

have different ways to practice liturgy –

some are very formal,

with ritualized ways

of praying and worshiping - -

some are less formal - -

but every church

has words, practices, rhythms of faith

that help us learn to live our days

in worship to God.

In the church

liturgy – the rhythm of worship and faith practice –

is deeply intentional.

As a person who loves

crafting rhythms of worship,

I can tell you that

there is lots of thought put into

all of the pieces of liturgy,

the patterns,

the words, the music, the arc of worship –

for the very reason

that we humans learn,

are influenced and shaped and formed

by these rhythms and practices –

they teach us about ourselves,

they teach us about God,

and they teach us how to be

people of God in the world.

When I lived in Helena, I led a group of people in worship each week,

In a brew pub.

One of the pieces I was always adamant about was,

It was worship.

Did we talk about life?

Yes

Did we drink a beer or wine together?

Yes

Did we talk about science fiction, a marvel movie or random Netflix shows?

Yes

But at the end of the night---

No matter what had happened.

We did worship.

We prayed for each other,

We slowed down the moment,

Even when Bon-Jovi’s living on a prayer was in the background.

I would draw everyone together and tell the story of Jesus gathering around the table with his disciples, breaking bread and sharing a cup.

Other ministries had rock bands,

And droves of people.

What our group had was each other…

And a place that was in the world but felt different

Where we focused on God’s offering of love as we shared

Juice and bread.

Where we could sit quietly together and not need to be, or bring anything but ourselves.

Like the liturgy of the church,

which helps us

see ourselves and the God we know

and allows our lives

to be formed and transformed

into something that

looks more and more

like the image of Christ,

so the liturgy of our lives –

the routines and rhythms

of our days -

when we are intentional,

should help lead us

closer and closer

to the image of

God with us

God in us

God through us

too.

The earliest followers of Jesus

knew this.

As we read today

from the book of Acts,

those early followers of the Way

ordered their whole lives

around reflecting the love of Christ

and following in his footsteps.

Luke, the writer of Acts,

tells us that they devoted themselves

to the scripture – the teachings of the apostles,

to the community,

to shared meals,

and to prayer.

The rhythm of their lives,

the liturgy of their lives

reflected their faith

and their desire to grow

closer to God and to each other.

What about the liturgy

of your life?

The rhythm of your days?

In what ways does it

reflect your faith?

How does it help you

to build the habits

of loving God

and loving those around you?

Over the next few weeks,

we’re going to talk

about our lives as liturgy.

We’ll look at

the ways that the things

that we do each day –

the common, everyday tasks

of being a human

in our time and place

are the places God uses

to teach us about ourselves

and about God,

to help us build our capacity

to love God, love others, and love ourselves,

and to invite us into a place

of transformation of our hearts and our lives

to be more and more like Jesus.

There’s this sign

that hangs on the wall

in a New Monastic Christian

community house –

it says

“Everyone wants a revolution.

No one wants to do the dishes.”

The work of transforming the world –

of making it better –

of making it look more

like the vision Jesus shared –

is generally speaking

not the big, flashy, earth-shattering stuff –

it’s the everyday work

of showing up,

of caring for each other,

of praying for our enemies,

of reading the Bible,

of saying the kind word,

the practices, the habits, the routines

that we do over and over again

as they take root in our hearts and our lives

and from which God finds space

to form and transform us.

In the book *The Divine Conspiracy,*

author Dallas Wllard says that

where “transformation

is actually carried out

is in our real life,

where we dwell with God

and our neighbors…

God has yet to bless anyone

except where they actually are.”

This rhythm of life and faith,

this liturgy,

plays itself out

in these lives we have –

these lives right in front of us –

the ones where

we aren’t living as we thought we might

or as we hoped we would.

The ones where we wish

we could do more,

or do better –

and sometimes we do

and often we don’t.

The ones where marriages struggle

and where parenthood is hard.

The ones where we are weary.

The ones where we get lonely.

The ones where we

want to make a difference,

but we aren’t sure where to start.

The ones where

we have to get dinner on the table

and the dog needs to go for a walk

and the laundry isn’t folded.

The ones where we have back pain

and boring weeks,

where our lives look small,

where we doubt,

where we wrestle with meaning,

where we worry about

the ones we love,

where we have trouble

loving our neighbors

and loving the ones

closest to us,

where we grieve,

where we wait,

where we hope.

In all that,

through all that –

there is this invitation,

this promise - -

God is redeeming the world,

my corner of it,

your corner of it,

every corner of it.

God is bringing a kingdom –

a new way of being

into the world

that has to do with love

and justice

and freedom

and hope.

God is calling us

to grow and repent

and accept love

and share love,

to worship,

to draw near,

to bring our whole lives

into God’s purpose,

God’s rhythm,

God’s liturgy of life and love and grace.

Each week during this series,

we’re going to end worship

with a breath prayer

that you can take home with you

to use as a liturgy –

a prayer, a practice –

over the coming week

and whenever you need it really.

The way breath prayer works

is that you breathe deeply in

and breathe deeply out - -

aware that in Hebrew

the word for Spirit

is the same as the word for breath,

and so as we breathe with intention,

we connect with the Holy Spirit.

So this week,

as you wake up in the morning

(perhaps right after

you’ve made your bed?)

use this prayer - -

as you breathe in pray

“God of Love”

and as you breathe out pray

“Guide me this day”

Let’s try it - -

God of Love,

guide me this day.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

A huge attribution to Rev. Sarah Clark at Grace UMC Billings, who wrote this sermon and allowed us to adapt it for Sunday worship. She said it best! And we are thankful for that.