

Last Sunday while I was away on vacation Letarshia preached an excellent sermon based on John's version of events after the death and resurrection of Jesus. She shared from John 19 about Jesus appearing to the disciples who were locked in a room with fear. She shared about how we lock ourselves in a box with fear, doubt, and unbelief.

Today we are going to be reading Luke's version of this story and I hope that what I share will build upon the foundation that Letarshia laid out last week. What I plan to share is how I saw first hand how hiding our stuff from others and God and lacking vulnerability leads to unhealthiness and separation from God and one another.

Read Luke 24:36-53

As many of you know our 17-year-old son James is currently not living with us. For the past 6 weeks James has been living in the North Georgia mountains in a very primitive camping environment. James is living in the woods under the guidance of the Blue Ridge Wilderness Camp.

My wife and I came to recognize the brokenness in our family several weeks ago and made the decision to enroll James at Blue Ridge. We made a commitment to this particular wilderness camp because they approach mental health issues from a family approach rather than an individualistic approach. In other words, they work with the whole family rather than just the one individual.

For the past 6 weeks James has been living in very primitive conditions in the North Georgia mountains. No tents for cover but just tarps. The group of 8 boys and the staff migrate every couple of days and dig their own latrines, set up their tarps, and build their fires from scratch using primitive fire building techniques.

I want to first report that James is doing incredibly well. I am so proud of what he has accomplished over the past 6 weeks. He is smiling and happy and taking ownership for his part in our family brokenness. He has told us that he has more work to do and will know when it is time to return home. We are so proud of him.

James is discovering his inner strength that our culture immersed in technology, social media, class performance, and other distractions has prevented him from seeing within himself. Those of you who know more about his journey will be amazed when you have an opportunity to see him again. Again, as his parents we are so proud of him and what he is accomplishing.

Wednesday of this week my wife and I were able to spend a day with him in the woods. On Thursday and Friday, we have been in 2 days of parenting workshops in Clayton, GA. We have been learning about communication skills and other helpful resources as parents.

In the workshop we were with about 20 other parents. They came from many parts of the country. One of the subjects we talked about was the ways we hide ourselves and our family struggles from others. We close ourselves off or we feel as though others send the message that they do not want us to be honest about ourselves and our struggles.

And this is where I think this passage of Scripture connects to us. In the John version of this story, after his resurrection, Jesus encounters the disciples locked away behind closed doors. In Luke's version that we read today we do not have locked doors mentioned but I'm going to assume that the doors most likely were locked.

Luke as well as John describe frightened disciples assembled together. They are frightened because the events of the past few days has made them feel as though they need to huddle deeply together and block out the world around them. They are fearful of what the world will do to them.

And concealing who we really are is something that all of us do to some degree. To help us come to terms with how we conceal ourselves, I am going to invite us into an exercise based on these texts of Scripture.

In your bulletin you have an empty space. I invite you to draw a line down the middle. This represents the door. A closed door like Luke describes when he tells this post-resurrection story.

On the left side of the door is how you present yourself to others. What others see about you. If you ask others to describe you this is what they would say. So, I invite you to write on the left side of the door what you show to others. You might write down some observations like outgoing, or shy, or successful, or whatever.

Now on the right side of the door I invite you to write what you hide from others. This is the place for you to write down your own insecurities that you try to hide from others. This is where you can share maybe some part of your history that you don't want others to know about you. Maybe you were abused, maybe you are fearful of failure, maybe you harbor some regrets.

Take some time to write down these items.

Now think back to the text of Scripture. In this story Jesus appears on both sides of the door. Jesus is both on the side of the door that we show others and Jesus is on the side of the door that we try to hide from others.

In fact, it is on the side of the door of hiddenness where Jesus becomes most vulnerable. It is in the hidden side where Jesus shows the scars in his hands and in his feet. After the resurrection the scars don't disappear. Because of the resurrection Jesus has no need to hide his scars.

As I participated in these workshops over the past few days, I listened as other parents shared their own pain that they try to so hard to keep hidden. These were all families that our society looks at and deems "successful." On the left side of the door these families reveal "success."

But everyone of us was having to face that our appearances were deceiving. That on the hidden side of the door were items like drug abuse, out of wedlock pregnancies, suicide attempts, financial struggles, marital separation and divorce.

One of the parents said something which I thought was very insightful. We talked about Facebook. About how we all present ourselves on Facebook and through other social media. We all present our good side on social media and when we are out in public.

This one parent said that her husband told her to stop comparing her inside life to other's outside life. In other words, don't compare your own insecurities to how others present the way they want to be perceived. If we compare our insides to others outsides, we will always feel ashamed of ourselves. And that is a problem in our society.

It is in the insecure and hidden parts of ourselves that Jesus reveals his own scars. It seems to me that if we are going to be a faithful resurrection type of church then we need to encourage and support one another to share our own struggles and insecurities.

We do not need to be another place where people put on masks. If we are going to be faithful, then we must believe that Jesus meets us in the hidden places and shows us his scars. We too must be a place that allows people to show their own scars as well.

We do not need to keep lots and lots hidden. Jesus meets us in those places where we are trying to hide our scars. It is in these places where we are scared that Jesus shows us that he is there with us with his own scars as well.

And I hope and pray that we are a community of faith that does not encourage people to hide their scars. But instead a place where by revealing our own scars we support and encourage others to reveal their scars so that together we can experience the healing from Christ. AMEN.

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-Given: April 15, 2018 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)