

If you know this song please join in singing, “Row, row, row, your boat gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream.” One summer at church camp Acts 1:8 was the theme verse and our counselor taught us the verse to the tune of Row Row Row Your Boat, “You will receive power, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8” Act 1:8 is the theme verse of Acts. Just after uttering these words Jesus ascends into heaven and the disciples stand there looking up. When an angel promptly reminds them what Jesus had just said, don’t just stand here with your jaws hanging open, this Jesus movement is going places and you are the ones going to carry it. And they did carry it to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Today’s reading from Acts is the story of the founding of the church in Corinth, a Greek city, a place that the first disciples would have thought the end of the earth. The other reading is from Paul’s first letter back to the church in Corinth. Paul was in Corinth for a year and a half establishing the church, likely several small house churches. He has now moved on and is working in Ephesus. Paul is writing to the church in Corinth because he has heard the people arguing about who their favorite preacher that has ever served them. People are saying, “The way my favorite preacher did things is the only right way to do it.” In 1st Corinthians Paul says, “some of you are saying, ‘I belong to Paul,’ or ‘I belong to Apollos,’ or ‘I belong to Cephas,’ or ‘I belong to Christ.’” What do the people of the Corinthian congregation mean when they say this? “I like Paul—he was the founder of

the congregation, starter of tradition. Or I like Apollos, he is a smooth talker, he’s got media appeal, he’s from Alexandria (Egypt not MN). Or I like Cephas (Peter), he reaches even father back in the tradition.” They are arguing and dividing themselves into cliques, claiming, “Our way is the only true way to be, or to do church.”

Do we do this today? Of course all sorts of communities are torn apart by infighting: families, friendships, teams, workplaces, even churches. What does Paul say to the Corinthians, and how could it be helpful to us? Paul says you are confusing the message with the messenger. That’s not right. The message isn’t dependent messenger. The underlying promise of the cross is always true, “the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

Paul pleads with the church, “be in agreement, that there are no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.” Paul uses the Greek word translated “mind” other places in his writing. The Greek word is *psyche*, where we get our word psychology, and it communicates more than just mind, it is our whole being. Paul is saying be of the same mind/being as Jesus. What is the mind/being of Jesus? What is at the core of Jesus?

At the core of Jesus is a self giving love, that both honors ourself, our child-of-God-ness and a love that is willing to give of ourselves for the sake of our neighbor. That love is at the core of Jesus. That is the cross. That is why the cross is foolishness. That love is the power of God.

In this place, in our little local church that means we must come together in our disagreements and be willing to listen so deeply that our minds/being might be changed by the other, by the person we are listening to. We are called, we are reprimanded by Paul, to engage each other, to engage the person we disagree with and to be in conversation with them.

An example from today's reading: Paul hears from Chloe's people about the quarrels. Paul doesn't tell Chloe's people to tell the church in Corinth. Paul goes directly to them and directly addresses the persons he has issue with.

Whether our minds are changed or not, we are called to be of one mind, the mind of Christ, we are called to be of one purpose together. We are called to continue engaging in mission; making this world a better place together—even in the mist of disagreements. We are called to lean in and carry on.

Feedback is a powerful tool. Over the last three weeks your conversations me and other church leaders have been valuable feedback as we have had some different music in worship and as we have talked about how our faith demands that we care for creation and how even in the midst of our missteps in creation care God continues to love us and daily raises us to new life. With regards to the feedback some have been challenged and some have said, "Finally we are talking about the environment, now let's start acting."

As Paul works to get us to listen deeply to each other; religious leaders, scientists, citizens' groups are calling us to listen to God's people suffering and the climate science

data shouting. The information about a changing climate comes to us from tree rings, rocks, coral reefs, ocean temps, but what I find fascinating is the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets. These ice sheets are giant domes of ice that preserve climate data very much like tree rings. Snow is added to the top, it turns into ice and scientists can drill and remove a core and examine not only the ice but also the bubbles of ancient air that are trapped in the ice. By looking at the chemistry of the ice we can measure the past temperature and by looking at the air we can measure the carbon dioxide content. CO2 being the most talked about gas that is trapping heat in our earth's atmosphere and changing the climate. Because of the ice cores we can look back about 800,000 years and see the fluctuations in both CO2 and temp and they have fluctuated together; they go up and down together. In the last 800,000 years CO2 was never more than 280ppm. Until we started adding CO2 to the atmosphere, and by 1950 we crossed 300ppm, now CO2 in our atmosphere is over 400ppm. Despite the great increase in CO2 we have only see about a 1.5F increase in temp over the last century. What does that change in temperature look like on the land? *This is the Ilulissat glacier, on the West Coast of Greenland. Between 1902 to 2001, that 100 year period the Ilulissat Glacier retreated 8 miles. Between 2001 and 2010 it retreated 9 miles. * But that is just one glacier, so let's look at all the glaciers in the Yukon Territory, Canada. In 1958 there were 1400 glaciers in the Yukon. By 2008: 4 grew, 300 disappeared completely and the rest retreated.

Some might say, "ok, I get it about the glaciers. They're pretty and I will get my grandkids up there before they all

melt, but Jesus says stuff like, 'feed the hungry.' That's what we are supposed to care about." We have data on the amount of CO2 in our atmosphere going back 800,000 years. Humans have been growing crops for about 10,000 years and for the last 10,000 years the climate has changed very little... until now. Climate effects the land, water, air and living things. This earth is one big system—it is all connected. The changing climate isn't just about glaciers, although they make the change easy to see, Climate change is about food supply, and natural disasters things that have real human impacts.

Are there things we should argue about as a congregation? Yes. We should lean in and have courageous conversations... about how to best make the world and our community a better place, we should lean in and talk about worship styles, race and Global Climate Change and many other things. We are called to lean in... and carry on. We are called as Christians to carry on. "The cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." We come together every Sunday to give thanks to God and to be reminded about the powerful love of God that saves us and sends us. We can go out into the world renewed and refreshed and with purpose because we know, we believe, we have faith that we are not alone... we go with God and we go together. We are the church. We are God's plan for good in this world, we're not the only place that good comes from, but we are the ones that God is working through. God is using us to make the world a better place. What is God calling us to do?