

#The question lying under these stories asks, “How are we faithful to our tradition in light of the changing world around us?” These stories (Jesus gets food and heals on the Sabbath) are extremely helpful in understanding what Jesus’ message is and why they want to kill him in just a few chapters. They are also extremely important for us today, as Christians in general, but also as Peace people on this day of our Annual Meeting. These two stories are written down in the midst of one of the four major changes or events that have dramatically impacted Christianity—these were written down right after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to New Testament Ph. D. Preston Sprinkle the four events that have most impacted Christianity: 1) Resurrection of Jesus. 2) Conversion of Constantine (313)-from persecuted minority to place of privilege and power. 3) Printing Press (1440)- people became literate and able to get info. 4) Internet- and like when these Bible verses were written, we are in the “eye of the storm” of this transformation in Christianity. We are asking, #“How can we faithful to our tradition in light of the ever-changing world around us?”

The first three major events changed the church, so will the current one, but we don’t yet know what it will look like. Remember that our Bible reading today is a window into the conversations happening at the time and God’s commentary amidst the first major change. In all of the first three major event that effected Christianity, the changes are about methodology not theology (theology is what we believe about God, methodology is how we practice our faith). For the most part, our theology didn’t change throughout the major events, our methodology changed—the way we practiced our faith changed—we need to ask, “How do we help people follow Jesus in this new/emerging time.”

I going to talk about change and how the change today, is different then the change that has been happening in the last

few hundred years. To help us understand we can look at the words complex and complexity. #I’m taking this example from the book *Team of Teams* by General Stanley McChrystal who took over command of the Joint Special Operations Task Force in Iraq in 2004. #In the book he says complex and complexity are different. Complex means you can dismantle and craft a solution. An example is the assembly line. A car is complex to put together, but there is a linear or continuous process to get from point “a” to point “b” it might be hard but it is possible. We have entered a new era, the relationship between cause and effect is no longer understandable—this is complexity, it is discontinuous change. We need to adapt to changing conditions as we go. Most of us grew up in a world where things would be they had been in the past; we simply have to get better and our old methods, but the game has changed. We are in a different environment.

We are in the eye of the storm. Similar to when the Bible was being written, we are asking, “How can we be faithful to our tradition in light of the ever-changing world around us?” In Revelation 21:5 God says, “See I have come to make all things new...” We must remember we are not randomly searching for the best strategy, we are partnering with God. There is **Hope**—there is lots of complexity—but God is faithful, we don’t know where this is going but we know God will be faithful and we are striving to be faithful too. What does is mean to be faithful? Helping the church think about and navigate the complexity of our world. It is about thoughtfully responding to the facts of our current reality and keeping hope that God will prevail in the end.

What will this look like at Peace Lutheran Church of Plymouth in 2017? Join us in the Annual meeting for a more complete answer but I’ll say one thing now. Our first two goals from the Church Assessment Tool (CAT) that Peace took in the fall of 2015 # ask: 1) How might we... welcome families with children

and youth? 2) How might we... reach new people and incorporate them into the life of Peace? How do we do these things? These have always been relatively complex questions, but today it involves a level of complexity the church hasn't seen for 500 years probably longer. If we treat these as complex questions we will react—working harder and trying to get better at what we have been doing. Responding to these questions in the midst of the complexity that describes our current reality requires some reflection.

We are not alone. Across the United States, churches are losing both members and vitality as increasing numbers of young people disengage. #Kara Powell wrote her book *Growing Young* based on research with over 250 vital congregations that are engaging young people. She asked, "How are these churches changing young people?" and found that the young people are changing these churches.

#That brings us to today's reading from the gospel of Luke. Conversations about Sabbath law seem obscure to us living in a 24/7 culture, but Sabbath isn't the problem. Jesus doesn't have a theological issue with keeping the Sabbath, he has a problem with the interpretation of how to practice/keep the Sabbath, it's about methodology. It's not a theological disagreement it is a disagreement of methodology. And it's this disagreement over methodology that gets Jesus killed. Jesus is killed by the force of people under the influence of FEAR, fearful of change. All of the law and Sabbath law for sure is made for the sake of life or to promote life and human wholeness. Jesus is for life and community. Jesus is for the Gospel. In these two stories Jesus embodies the Gospel. What happens? The same thing that happened a few weeks ago in the reading when Jesus is in his home town, Jesus proclaims **abundant love for all**, the gospel and the people are enraged. The question for us is: What if we don't like the methodology prescribed by our reflection? What if Kara

Powell's six strategies upset our order, our way of keeping Sabbath?

The way I see this there is no way of getting through it without death. But as Christians maybe death isn't the worst thing—the Apostle Paul asks, "Oh, death where is your sting." Here at Peace we are no strangers to death, with Mandi's funeral and Lisa's funeral and Arne's funeral. These are times of pain and sadness, but also times of families, friends and congregation coming together, building relationships and telling about the hope we have in Jesus Christ. So maybe we need to embrace death. I see one of two deaths happening. First, what we'll call the delayed death, in this future reality we stick with what we have been doing and we try to do it better. As pastor Emily said last week, "we get better fishing tackle and bait." We mostly ignore the change that is happening around us. There is a part of me that likes this one. I know it. I know how to do it and how to get better at it. But with this one, in some number of years, we will become so irrelevant to the world around us... this is the delayed death.

The second future reality involves dying to ourselves and it will require the pain to be felt sooner. It will require us to familiarize ourselves with our theology so we don't confuse what we believe about God with our methodology. We'll have to carefully look at the faith practices that research says are "helping people follow Jesus in this new/emerging time." The death comes when we find some inconsistencies—when something we've been doing, we have to change a little bit or a lot.

All change involves grief, there will be loss, there will be death, but our theology says in dying to ourselves we are made new in Christ—abundant, vital life in Christ. It is scary, all death is. There is lots of complexity but God is faithful "and the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things

new. Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life." **"How can we be faithful in light of the ever-changing world around us?"** We don't know where this is going but we know God will be faithful and we are striving to be faithful too. Amen.