

June 07, 2020 Sermon  
Matthew 28:16-20  
Genesis 1:1-2:4 (Sermon base)

Somewhere in the Smith archives, there is an old reel to reel film that was taken at my grandmother's house during a family gathering. My sister, who would have been around the age of three, was building up a stack of blocks. We see how she painstakingly put each block in just the right spot, so they wouldn't come tumbling down. It was a masterpiece in her mind, I'm sure.

Well, I was probably about one and half, and I came toddling into the picture, walked over to the freshly built wall of blocks, and with one swooping arm, I knocked them all down. I turned to the camera with a big smile on my face, happy with what I had accomplished. I don't remember what my sister did, but I'm sure she wasn't too happy about the situation.

I'm using Genesis today, because it's all about God and his creation. You know, God was very meticulous about *his* creation. He didn't want to be alone. He wanted a little company and he knew if that were to be so, then other plans would have to be laid first. So *please* know, and *keep* in mind, that we were *not* some little afterthought that God came up with just because he could.

He made sure we could see a difference in night and day. He gave us water to drink, and then filled the water with things we would eventually be able to eat. He created the earth so there would be fruit trees, vegetables, beautiful flowers and lovely green grass that would enable him to feed the animals that were being put on this earth for our enjoyment. He left *absolutely* nothing out.

And then, he created us, men and women, to have dominion over everything...not *domination*, but dominion. Humankind was going to have to take care of everything and make sure that all God had created, would continue on the right path.

And here's the best part. God made us in HIS image! Please notice that he didn't divvy up who would do what with creation. He gave it to those who were created in HIS image...so...*all* of us are in charge of taking care of this beautiful earth, and not only are we in charge of taking care of the water, the earth, the animals, fish and fowl, but we are in charge of taking care of ***each other!***

Turns out, God created us because he didn't want to be alone. He didn't enjoy living in isolation. And as it ALSO turns out, *we're* not too happy about being in isolation, either. Even though most people are starting to get out more and more, we *still* aren't seeing people as much as we did before. In some places, being isolated has caused tension, anger, and out of control rage.

Day after day, we heard about the number of covid cases, hospitalizations and deaths, and the numbers are still coming in. This isn't over, yet, but people were still managing to stay off the streets in most places, and then along comes the senseless killing of George Floyd. A black man. He is the latest victim in the senseless killings of black men and women...part of *God's* beloved *creations*.

Suddenly, part of the world, that God so meticulously crafted and created in his image came tumbling down.

As I said, being inside creates tensions. We had *already* seen the tensions building with people showing up at Governor's offices and mayor's homes to make demands on those who have been given the difficult task of running their part of the world. And I watched, and I wondered what would happen next, but I didn't have to wait very long to see.

The killing of George Floyd was the straw that broke the camel's back. It was probably time. Perhaps people would have broken out in marches and protests and riots for some other reason, because we are human, and isolation is *not* a good thing for us, but you know what? People of color have been in their very own kind of isolation for years.

I know there are some who greatly dislike the phrase, "Black lives matter," because (and I'm only assuming, here), they feel as if *all* lives matter. Well they DO matter. ALL LIVES MATTER. But we're not saying black lives matter *most* or black lives matter *more*. We're saying, they MATTER!

I watched that agonizing video of the man with a knee in the back of his neck while the police officer sat there with his hands casually in his pockets, brazenly looking right at the person who had him on video, and suddenly it dawned on me that the life of this black man, that was being held under his knee didn't *matter* to him, because if it DID matter, then he would have done something more humane. And we see this *way* too often in our news, these days. Black lives matter.

Yes, we all matter. We matter to God. He created us. And he created us to *love*. He created us to have dominion over all of creation. Not DOMINATION, which is control over others, but dominion over things like taking care that the water isn't polluted, caring for the plants and animals that were put on this earth.

He created us to lift one another up. He created us to *love* one another, no *matter* the *color* of the skin, and I'm too old and lived too far north to remember blacks having separate drinking fountains, or having separate places to sit in restaurants, or not being able to sit in a restaurant at all.

I've *never* had to sit in the back of a bus unless I wanted to. I've *never* felt like anyone feared me when I approached them. I've never been *stopped* by a *police officer* for a made-up charge, and honestly, nothing that I can recall has ever been denied me if I wanted it. White privilege *is* a *thing*. And we *really* need to start talking about it. We *need* to read up. We *need* to listen to what is being said and we *need* to start doing what God wants us to do and that is to take care of each other, talk about our differences and what that means to us as God's created beings, no *matter* the *color* of our skin.

I have a friend who, just today, posted a story about how when he was in the early years of his marriage with his first child, decided that he would get a German Shepherd puppy to help them feel safer when he was gone to work. He had made some phone calls in response to ads in the paper, and when he finally found the one he wanted, he made arrangements to pick up the puppy, but when the door opened, the owner of the dog saw my friend and said, "I won't sell to a person of color." Sometimes, the things I hear, are *simply* unbelievable.

We were *all* made in God's image. Surely God sheds tears when he sees what is going on. I know *I* do. I've shed a *lot* of tears, lately. I'm worried about the virus, I'm concerned for the people I serve in my congregation because I love them dearly, and I know they all want to be back together, but if we're all trying to take care of God's creation, then we *need* to have some patience. And now, I worry about our world, and the idea that we are not taking the time to see one another eye to eye.

There has been a lot of destruction. I worry so, for those who lost their businesses because of the virus and now have lost entire structures due to riots. But, just like walls of blocks that have been knocked down by a one-and-a-half year old, buildings can be re-built. Lives that have been senselessly snuffed out by a knee to the neck, cannot.

So where do we go from here? In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus is sending out his disciples to make MORE disciples. He's not telling them to be choosy about who they are. In fact, Jesus says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all NATIONS, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."

Jesus taught about healing. Jesus taught about love. Jesus taught that it doesn't matter what you do for a living, what your past has been, who you hang out with, or the color of your skin.

Remember, Jesus is the one that went looking for the one sheep that got away from the ninety-nine. Do we say, "meh, it was just one...let it go," or do we go after it because it *matters*? Something to think about.

I DO know that we *all* matter to God, but God created us to watch out for one another, to *support* one another, to seek *justice* for each other when we see that *justice* is not being served.

"Teach them to obey everything I commanded you." Said Jesus. "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Amen.