

## Love, Death, Forgiveness

*Pentecost 3C—June 5, 2016*

*[This transcript was meant for a spoken performance. It is not optimized for a reading experience.]*

*When he saw her, the Master was moved with compassion for her, and he said to her: “Do not weep.”*

Will you pray with me? Father, Mother, brother, sister, spirit “Oh the marriage of your spirits here has caused you to remain. May we open to your love. Amen May this be so!

*[Play video “Puff the Magic Dragon” by Paul Stookey]*

*Quote or lyrics  
with optional line breaks  
(there's a separate **Inline quote** style  
for quotes inside a paragraph)*

That song you just heard was composed by Paul Stookey. Not sure who Paul Stookey is? Think Puff the Magic Dragon of Peter, Paul and Mary. That is who Paul is.

I intentionally asked for this song to be sung by Sarah. The song is called ‘there is love’ Most people know ‘There is Love’ as ‘The Wedding Song.’

Once I asked for the song and not too long after, I had my doubts about using it. What was I thinking? I thought of switching songs. I even played Adele’s Hello, that didn’t work. I listened to Lady Antebellum’s song ‘I Need You Now.’ Similar to Adele’s ‘Hello’ song but I Need You Now is about ... well? It’s about drunk dialling an ex-lover. She sings, ‘It’s a quarter after one, I’m all alone and I need you now.’

I am not going to ask for a show of hands about who has ever drunk dialled an ex. You know if you have done drunk dialling. You also know that drunk dialling never ever turns out pretty. What had been is over.

I sat with the first song, the one that I just played. I sat and connected to the resistance I had of keeping the song in today’s service.

There is Love was sung at my wedding. My first marriage. It was 1978 and Susan and I picked that song to be one in the service.

I was 21. I was in love and in 1978 we got married. A year later we had our daughter. 18 months later we had our son.

It was exciting to be newly married. Having kids was thrilling. I loved those experiences.

The marriage was shattered when I fell in love with another person.

There is the resistance to using that song. The marriage was shattered. The love that had been changed. I hurt the one I loved. I hurt the ones I loved.

Brene Brown was once asked, 'Can you love someone and cheat on them or treat them poorly?'

This was her reply

'I don't know if you can love someone and betray them or be cruel to them, but I do know that when you betray someone or behave in an unkind way toward them, you are not practising love. And, for me, I don't just want someone who says they love me, I want someone who practises that love for me every day.'

Leaving my marriage was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life. Through the experience of loving another person I became more authentic. That is what love and authenticity will do for you. 'Love is about making choices to show and be real. "(Brene Brown)

Again, "Love is about making choices to show and be real. "(Brene Brown)

Love is also the choice to "let our true selves be seen". (Brene Brown)

The years following the divorce were not easy. Separately Susan and I had to find out who we were post-marriage. We had to learn to live without the other. We also had to figure out how to be parents together as individuals. That takes work. That takes honesty.

My resistance to the song Sarah sang is also connected to forgiveness.

Let's go down that path, the path of forgiveness. I want to push you faster down the path by saying that in order to forgive you must be ready, willing and able to accept death.

Stay with me, to see if any clarity comes out of this. You cannot forgive unless you are willing to accept a death. Forgiveness comes when you are aware that what you were expecting, wanted or desired from the other is gone, dead.

I will let you chew and struggle with that this week. Forgiveness is connected to death.

As I was working with the materials and preparing to write, I was suddenly aware that I had not asked for forgiveness from Susan. I have not asked for forgiveness from our children. That is some unfinished work to be done, that is what my resistance is about.

Between the layers of love and forgiveness is threaded the feeling of compassion. Compassion is the genuine concern for the suffering or misfortunes of another.

Love, forgiveness and compassion are cultivated when we allow our most vulnerable and our most powerful selves to be deeply seen and known. Let me take this further. When we honour our interconnectedness; love, forgiveness and compassion deepen with trust, respect, kindness and affection.

Trust, respect, kindness and affection deepen love, forgiveness and compassion. This in return opens us to honour the spiritual connection, the interconnectedness of all that is.

My personal work is not done. I have not gone to the people I hurt and said please forgive me.

Brene Brown reminds me that “It is hard to practise compassion when we are struggling with our authenticity or when our own worthiness is off-balance.”

One more path. This path is an ancient one. It is the story of compassion at Nain.

The storyteller we call Luke is telling a tale. How do we know it's a tale, like a parable? Here is how you test it. Here and now how many of you have ever, even once witnessed a dead man get up out of his coffin? Put your hand way up so everyone can see that you have seen an actual dead man or dead woman get up and go about their day?

That is how we know that this is a tale. The story teller is using a story with a message, a story with a teaching. This story has lots of images.

The man was not in a coffin but was on a bier, a platform for the dead body. A coffin would have shielded the body.

Jesus goes up and touches the bier. That was a giant faux pas. The purity laws forbid Jews to touch the dead. Jesus touches. Purity laws also forbid Jews to have contact with others, those who were not Jewish. Jesus reaches and he touches.

Why does he touch? Why does he even get involved? What do you know about women in first century ancient Middle East? Women were totally dependent on safety and security of the men in their life. In this story this woman has not only lost her husband but also now her only son.

This is a story about vulnerability. This is a story about compassion.

This is a story being told so that the listener might explore who Jesus was.

When we take away the storyteller's special effects, dead man rising is a special effect, what are we left with? The author is unveiling something about who Jesus was and in turn who God is.

If you know your bible, you would know that this story is also found in the first book of Kings in the Hebrew sacred text.

Today's story draws the listener's attention to the character of Jesus. He embodies compassion and care. Luke is holding out an example, a template, one might say of what is desired in and from all. That includes you. That includes me.

Like last week's gospel Jesus's actions are in and of themselves prophetic in nature. In today's story Jesus acts on behalf of the widow, one of the most socially and economically disadvantaged among Israel's people.

On another level the story tells of Jesus disregards the rules. Jesus touches the bier, Jesus touches the dead. Jesus would then be considered unclean and therefore shunned. Jesus disregards his social status as a Jewish male in order to act on behalf of someone with little or no societal power.

Luke wants you to understand Jesus, God, Spirit is an experience that breaks through boundaries, breaks through darkens, breaks through fear, breaks through whatever is holding you back and keeping you disconnected one from another.

Love, forgiveness and compassion is what connects us one to one another and this is good news indeed.