

The Outsiders



When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." - Luke 7:9

Have you ever felt like a third wheel? Life on the outside of the “in” crowd can make it difficult to fit in, to feel “at home.” The Gospel of Luke chronicles Jesus’ ministry with those on the so-called “outside.” What can we learn from these stories and Jesus’ call to turn the inside out and the outside in?

The Humble

6/16/19

“You didn’t anoint my head with oil, but she has poured perfumed oil on my feet. This is why I tell you that her many sins have been forgiven; so she has shown great love. The one who is forgiven little loves little.” Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

—Luke 7:36-8:3

So often, we find ourselves judging the sinners among us, forgetting our own sin and failures. The woman who comes to Jesus in today’s passage presents herself humbly at his feet, perhaps the most vulnerable position possible. Her love and humility open the door to a relationship with Jesus, one of forgiveness and grace. No matter our sins, no matter the sins of others, Jesus forgives those who come with humility and love, removing their outsider identity.

The Tormented

6/23/19

As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, a certain man met him. The man was from the city and was possessed by demons. For a long time, he had lived among the tombs, naked and homeless... and the demons left the man and entered the pigs. The herd rushed down the cliff into the lake and drowned.— Luke 8:26-39

The scripture story describes a man whose demons forced him to live on the outside of community. The story is not only an ancient tale. So many struggle with demons that hold

our spirits captive. The stigma of this torment keeps us separated, holding life at arm's length. Transformation and healing is possible but it may need to start with the work of compassion and truth-telling. How can we stay in conversation, not running and hiding from the reality and pain of mental illness in our communities and be the healing salve of Jesus' presence?

The Homeless

6/30/19

Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and the birds in the sky have nests, but the Human One^{e]}">_[e] has no place to lay his head." — Luke 9:51-58

There are homeless people all around us, some are without a physical home and others without a spiritual home. This passage reminds us that even Jesus was homeless. Even Jesus was cast out and turned away. Whether we are welcoming those without a physical home or confronting our own need to find a spiritual home in Christ, this week we claim the reality of a new home as followers of Jesus. To claim our home in the Kin-dom requires us to let go of our former home and look toward our home with God.

The Traveler

7/7/19

"Go! Be warned, though, that I'm sending you out as lambs among wolves. Carry no wallet, no bag, and no sandals. Don't even greet anyone along the way. Whenever you enter a house, first say, 'May peace be on this house. If anyone there shares God's peace, then your peace will rest on that person. If not, your blessing will return to you." — Luke 10:1-11

The traveler is always an outsider, visiting new places and adjusting to customs and cultures outside their own experience. Jesus warns the disciples that not everyone will welcome them on their journey. We too, will suffer rejection on our journey as Jesus' followers. Jesus wants us to make the most of the places we are welcomed and not worry so much about the places that turn us away. It is the places of welcome where an outsider becomes an insider. Embrace them, find them and create them for others.

The Neighbor

7/14/19

He responded, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live." But the legal expert wanted to prove that he was right, so he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" — Luke 10:25-37

Who is our neighbor? The parable of the Good Samaritan reminds us that the outsider is our neighbor, perhaps even more a neighbor than the so-called "insiders" across the street. Neighbors act with love and grace when it is least expected. Who are the neighbors in your life and how are you called to be a neighbor, inviting and welcoming in spite of perceived differences and disagreements?

The Worthy

7/21/19

Jesus went with them. He had almost reached the house when the centurion sent friends to say to Jesus, "Lord, don't be bothered. I don't deserve to have you come under my roof. In fact, I didn't even consider myself worthy to come to you. Just say the word and my servant will be healed." ... When Jesus heard these words, he was impressed with the centurion. He turned to the crowd following him and said, "I tell you, even in Israel I haven't found faith like this." — Luke 7:1-10

Who is worthy of the love—of the grace—of God? Too often people in or out of the church live with the belief, "I am not worthy." They may be referring to their absence of faith, their life choices, or have even started to believe what "society" has declared about their identity. This week Jesus proclaims that what makes us worthy is not whether we are "in" or "out." As the church, we are called to affirm the worth of all people. How will we welcome the worthy and tear down the division between inside and out?

The Lonely

7/28/19

As he approached the city gate, a dead man was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was with herWhen he saw her, the Lord had compassion for her and said, "Don't cry." He stepped forward and touched the stretcher on which the dead man was being carried. Those carrying him stood still. Jesus said, "Young man, I say to you, get up." — Luke 7:11-17

Have you ever felt utterly alone? Even for just a moment? Imagine the widow who has lost both husband and son. The pain must be almost unbearable and yet, Jesus says "do not weep." Loneliness happens for many reasons and can create feelings of isolation, even in the midst of a crowd. Jesus knows this pain and raises us up to be comfort for one another. How are we called to rise up and comfort the lonely?