Duncan United Church

Sermon – August 12th, 2018

“Sharing our stories”

Last month I attended a staff development day for all the employees of the local library that I have faithfully served for the last 10 years or so. Usually I don’t feel that called or really excited about such an event, but when I sat down and the keynote speaker was introduced, I was somewhat intrigued by what they might have to say on the topic of “Sharing our stories”. Ivan Coyote is a writer from the Yukon Territory who writes books and gets to tell stories for a living, what a job to have! A might be a little bit jealous… Ivan talked about how their grandmother would gather them around the table in the mid-1970’s and would talk about the times when she worked for the library and would repair the spines of the old books. Ivan went on to say that they didn’t know why she decided to share that particular story, but that she felt safe enough and loved that she could share something that was very important and close to her heart. After Ivan finished speaking, Ivan got a standing ovation from over 400 library workers, which to be honest, is not something you see every day! This opening speech in my opinion, from someone I had never heard of in my life, sparked a flame inside me that reminded me how much sharing our own stories with each other is so important and brings us together.

I’ll say this, my family is definitely unique, some might say odd, but as my Papa puts it, “We were born this way Sarah and the Lord ain’t changing his mind now!” Hence, I accept my family as they are and they accept me. Stories have been such an integral part of my childhood and growing up. Everyone in my family tells stories from their lives, about how my Uncle Don snuck off to Woodstock in the middle of the night without my grandmother knowing, to how life is always better with whip cream and a heck of a lot of sugar in it.

My father’s coin collection held special reverence for us, he would sit my sister and I down in our play room downstairs and bring out one coin at a time. He would describe to us which country he got it from, when he was in that country, and would then proceed to tell us about it and how he learned to be a better person from its people during his time there. There sparked my love of stories and learning to have the ability to listen to people from every walk of life, young or old.

In today’s bible readings, we hear about in John 6 where it is described how Jesus told his disciples that he is the living bread, the Bread of Life and all who partake in it will hunger no more. What is one to take away from these scriptures? At times I have absolutely no clue… I can sit for hours at a time, combing through the same passage over and over again and not know what I need to take away from it… I have to say that it what happened with these passages. After a few days of contemplation, I then realized that we gather as a community of people who are from different backgrounds, feel different emotions, carry burdens, have different homes, different identities, and ancestors that came from many different places, but the thing that unites us is our community of faith in God. We gather here each Sunday (and pretty much every other day of the week here at Duncan United) to learn about God and become a better disciple of Jesus Christ. Being here reminds us that we are a part of one family, a family of so many different people who have the most amazing stories to tell and share with one another.

Though one might think sharing one’s stories is a very easy thing to do, but it is not always the case. One must feel loved, cherished, accepted, included, and most importantly, embraced before we feel comfortable sharing our stories with one another. It is important to listen to one another, for each of us brings something beautiful, different, and incredibly unique to God’s table, our church family.

The passage that affected me the most in today’s lectionary readings was this, from Ephesians 5:1-2, “Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn’t love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.”

So in conclusion, I encouraged each and everyone one of you to take a bit of bread and sit down with a friend or even a stranger and listen and share stories with one another and most importantly, love one another as Jesus loved us.