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Congregational Church of La Jolla
February 13, 2022

Blessed Are You

Luke 6: 17-26

Let us pray:

Gracious God: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts together be found acceptable in your sight. Our Rock and Our Redeemer. Amen.

Last week in the weekly worship email I sent out I featured a song - called Jesus Shaves. Now, I know some of you might have already listened to it but when I saw the lectionary text for today I knew we had to listen to it together. Take a listen:

Jesus shaves, joins corporate America
Get's laid off, grows his beard back
Stays up late, sees a TV commercial
About being a welder, makes a phone call

Jesus shaves, goes on an interview
Does real well, he's got a way with people
Two years on he's still an apprentice
But not for long, it's graduation

Jesus shaves, put's his best suit on
Get's a certificate, makes it official
Now he's a welder, wears a big helmet
And twice a week now, Jesus shaves

Blessed are the ones, who make peace
Blessed are the ones, who scrape by
Blessed are the ones living holy lives
And here's to the rest of us who try

Jesus shaves on Sunday morning
Decides to go fishing after going to church
It's wintertime, so he walks on water
Digs a whole in the ice and fishes for perch

Jesus shaves the scales off the fishes
Has a few fillets and a couple of brewskies

Thinks about the girl, Magdalena, in payroll
Decides that he's gonna ask her out for dinner

Jesus shaves for work on Monday
Goes to the office, gathers his courage
He's still don't know just how he's gonna ask her
Walks over to her desk and sees a picture of her boyfriend

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She says hello, how are you this morning?
He asks if she knows if it'll snow or rain
She notices him looking at the picture on her desktop
She says it's her cousin who's passed away

He say's that's great, she looks at him funny
He says he didn't mean that, she says it's okay
And then she smiles and they both start laughing
And that's when he knows it's his lucky day

Jesus shaves, smiling in the mirror
Magdalena is saying that they gotta hurry
They'll be late for work and the school bus is coming
But their daughter likes watching as Jesus shaves

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I love this song for several reasons. I first heard it three weeks ago when my bar trivia league was on our way home from competing. Jim Tompkins MacLaine, Nina's colleague and friend and my friend and someone who has been a friend of this church for a while, was driving and his phone was connected to his car stereo and this song randomly started playing. To me it was a revelation. It encapsulates the sort of theology that is at my core. One of my foundational beliefs is that the holy, the sacred, dwells among us every day. Church is the place where we come to worship God but God is beyond these four walls and very much in even the most ordinary moments of life. Traditional Church music isn't the only form of sacred music, we can find deep truths, and meaning in just

about every corner of our lives if we are attuned to pay attention. If we notice. If we take the time to reflect.

This past week I worked on putting together all of the parts to our Lent Boxes that each of you will receive shortly before the beginning of Lent. Every day there will be an activity for you and there are a number of objects that will guide us through Lent together. But it is rooted in the understanding that Spiritual practices don't need to be hard. In fact, they should be quite the opposite. They should be accessible moments of ordinary life. They should elicit joy and peace. They can be meditative, relaxing, challenging, intellectually engaging, or simply playfully fun. One of my core beliefs is that church happens everywhere and that God is in everything.

There need not be a distinction between church and the world. There is holiness in every corner of this world, there is sacred importance to the ordinary rhythms of daily life. This journey through Lent will bridge the gap between church and the world, bridge the gap between the ancient stories and your life, bridge the gap between the great Christian tradition in which we stand and the contemporary reality in which we live.

Jesus Shaves, in my opinion, qualifies as a sacred music. And I think I like it so much because it is rooted in my understanding of God and my relationship with Jesus. It's easy for us to hear the grandeur of scripture and to see the magnificent Renaissance art that convey the images of our sacred stories and to have in mind the grand and beautiful buildings and cathedrals that have been erected in the name of our faith that we can often forget to be mindful of the holiness of the ordinary. We can easily forget the Jesus who is present in our daily lives. We spend a lot of time focused on the really magnificent moments of Jesus' story—and less time on the Jesus who walks beside us in every moment of our lives.

To hear the words Jesus gets laid off, grows his beard back, decides to go to a job interview, gets the job, because he's got a way with people. And on Sunday he goes fishing, and it's wintertime so he walks on water, he thinks about the girl in the payroll department, Magdalena, and decides to go talk to her. And has an awkward, nervous exchange with her. Thinking that the picture on her desktop is her boyfriend he becomes disappointed but she tells him it's actually her cousin who died... to which he says, "That's great!" And she, we are told, of course, looks at him funny. This is all satire but it speaks a truth that I believe in so deeply and that is that God so loved the world that he sent Jesus into this world to stand in solidarity with all of us. I want a savior who knows what it's like to get laid off. I want a savior who knows what it's like to be socially awkward, I want a savior who knows how to enjoy life and knows when to take a break, I want a savior who knows how hard it is to properly maintain a beard and who gets so frustrated he shaves it off, but most importantly I want a savior who has spent a night down in the tombs and who has seen what life on the other side of that looks like. I want a savior who can testify to the eternal truth that death is not the last word.

There is the spark of the holy in each of us. God dwells within us and around us and Jesus Shaves conveys this idea very beautifully that each of us are sacred and holy and our lives are blessed and the work that we do in our daily lives is important and matters to God. We can see ourselves in this character the song speaks of who gets nervous, who goes fishing, who feels awkward, who wakes up in the morning and gets dressed, who experiences the range of emotions from anxiety and depression to joy and jubilation. It's the chorus of the song that made me choose to revisit it today:

Blessed are the ones, who make peace
Blessed are the ones, who scrape by
Blessed are the ones living holy lives
And here's to the rest of us who try

This is almost a paraphrase of our text out of the Gospel of Luke. Jesus is teaching and crowds have come to hear him and be healed by him. He teaches to his disciples, "Blessed are you who are poor... Blessed are you who hunger now...Blessed are you who weep now..Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude and insult and ridicule you..." Blessed. It means "made holy, consecrated." We use that word so much that its meaning is somewhat lost on us. But it wasn't always so straightforward. In biblical Greek the word for "blessed" was originally the word used to describe those who lived in another world far from the problems and worries of others. So it was often used to describe those who were so fortunate that they were free or detached from earthly cares or struggles. The blessed were the rich, the famous, those who had health, and riches, and land. But it is in Jesus' teachings that he turns the word on its head. He completely reverses the word and begins to refer to the poor, to the anguished, to the ridiculed, to the outcast as those who are blessed. This is a complete subversion of the word in his cultural context. He totally changes what it means to be blessed. Jesus is saying here that being blessed is actually the opposite of what people would have thought being blessed meant. Those who mourn are blessed, those who barely scrape by are blessed, those are try to live holy lives are blessed. This is God's economy. One that is turned on its head. Where the poor are blessed and the rich seek to be more like them. Where the meek are the powerful and the powerful look to the meek.

At the end of the day Jesus is telling us that the things that draw us closer to God are truly what make us blessed. Jesus is not picking on the rich or the well-fed or those who have what they need. Nor is Jesus is not idealizing poverty. Rather what I believe he is saying is a promise to those who are suffering in this world that God sees them, loves them, and wants them to thrive. Jesus wants no one to go without while others go with excess. Jesus is making a promise to those who are poor, who hunger, who hurt, who mourn that God walks besides them and knows and feels the depth of their pain.

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Because that is what it is all about. Trying. Trying with the assurance that the holy dwells within us and around us. That our savior is one who knows exactly what it's like to say the wrong thing at the wrong time, get laid off, get hurt, get rejected, get shut out. Ours is a savior who turns the order of the world upside down and who calls us blessed... not those who live detached from the struggles of daily life, no, rather ours is a savior who teaches us that blessedness is found here. In the grit, and grime of daily, ordinary life. In the routines of normalcy. In the mundane rhythms and normal everyday problems. Ours is a savior who looks at each of us and says, Yes, You, You are blessed.

And what more could we want? That is who I want to follow.

Amen.