

The Jungle Book: Keeping the Faith in Today's Jungle

Sermon: "Four Letters"

Traci Hubbard January 22, 2012

A Sunday school teacher asked her children, as they were on the way to church service, "And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?"

One bright little girl replied, "Because people are sleeping."

One night there was a woman at the airport who had to wait for several hours before catching her next flight. While she waited she bought a book and a pack of biscuits to spend the time. She looked for a place to sit and waited.

She was deep into her book, when suddenly she realized that there was a young man sitting next to her who was stretching his hand, with no concern whatsoever, and grabbing the pack of cookies lying between them. He started to eat them one by one.

Not wanting to make a fuss about it she decided to ignore him. The woman, slightly bothered, ate the cookies and watched the clock, while the young and shameless thief of biscuits was also finishing them. The woman started to get really angry at this point and thought 'If I wasn't such a good and educated person, I would have given this daring man a black eye by now.'

Every time she ate a biscuit, he had one too. The dialogue between their eyes continued and when only one biscuit was left, she wondered what was he going to do. Softly and with a nervous smile, the young man grabbed the last biscuit and broke it in two. He offered one half to the woman while he ate the other half.

Briskly she took the biscuit and thought, 'What an insolent man! How uneducated! He didn't even thank me!' She had never met anybody so fresh and sighed relieved to hear her flight announced. She grabbed her bags and went towards the boarding gate refusing to look back to where that insolent thief was seated.

After boarding the plane and nicely seated, she looked for her book which was nearly finished by now. While looking into her bag she was totally surprised to find her pack of biscuits nearly intact. 'If my biscuits are here', she thought feeling terribly, 'those others were his and he tried to share them with me.' Too late to apologize to the young man, she realized with pain, that it was her who had been insolent, uneducated and a thief, and not him.

How many times in our lives, did we know with certainty that something happened in a certain way, only to discover later that it wasn't true?

I can hear your thoughts now. Traci. Not another sermon about loving our neighbours as ourselves! Yep, here's another one folks and I will keep taking us back to this simple truth until we get it right.

How many times has our lack of trust within us made us judge other people unfairly with our conceited ideas, often far away from reality.

Joe Paterno's story

Motivational speaker Wayne Dyer said, "When we judge another, we do not define them, we define ourselves". Why didn't Jesus say, "Like your neighbour as yourself? Or "Like your enemies?" I believe Jesus chose the four letter word LOVE because liking someone requires sentiment, a warm and fuzzy feeling and choosing to love another does not require a feeling but a humble surrender to an action that is intent to be what is needed in the moment for the highest good of the other. (Phil. 2:1-4).

In his book, *Traveling Light*, Max Lucado said, "If we think about it, the people we cherish the most are the ones who give the most to us".

In the New Testament, we are encouraged 10 times told to love one another - 6 times told to love our neighbor as ourselves - 3 times told to love God - 3 times we are instructed to love our enemies - 2 times husbands are instructed to love their wives (1John.2:15 told "Love not the world"). Lucky for me, nowhere does the Scripture say "Same gendered married person like or love your spouse". It's true! That encouragement is nowhere in the scriptures in black and white or in CNN's or the BBC's red documented words of Jesus. The media was there with Jesus weren't they? I mean hasn't the media been present since the beginning, accurately and without bias, recording verbatim everything that happened beginning with the Garden of Eden all the way to the book of Revelation where those Steven King thousand eyed angels who resemble giant flies are sitting beside the throne of God inviting only those who have overcome? You know, the ones whose names are on "Heaven's Who's Who List" and will be invited to the biggest dinner party history will ever know. I realize this is a run on sentence and that this sermon will only make the news because someone will not like it.

But this is just my point and thank you Sir Winston Churchill for naming this human condition a long time ago. Bad news travels twice as fast than good news. So I am tucking some good news between the beginning and the end of this sermon with hope we will grab hold of a FREE, that's right, a financially FREE universal truth that has the power to give every individual on the planet a life full of contentment. (That was my advertising hook sentence...kind of like an infomercial).

The only cost to us for a life full of contentment is humility and an honest look at ourselves. Do we like who we really are when we watch the news, walk past the homeless, wait in line behind the aboriginal or have to listen to an American talk about patriotism? Do we like who we are when the person sitting next to us in the pew claps or even moves to the beat of a worship song or hymn? When "ignorant" person shares about meeting the Sacred through the sacrifice of Jesus? When someone talks more about past lives and near death experiences than the present moment?, Do we like who we are when some of the people we are the closest to have polar opposite beliefs around issues that make us ache inside? Do we really like the person we are in our thoughts and hearts when we encounter ordinary moments like these in our daily lives? If we are honest with ourselves, I believe our answer would be "NO", we don't like the shadow part of ourselves and if we are okay with our shadow, well, we are deceived by our arrogance to the point that we are as disconnected with our shadows as Peter Pan was when he chased his shadow inside Wendy's bedroom. Our shadow is like the Hebrew law, a divine gift that remains with us to remind us that like everyone else, we need grace, mercy and forgiveness. We need strength, comfort and teaching. We need guidance, discipline and rebuking. We need all these things in order to learn humility so we can love ourselves in spite of ourselves, just like God loves us. We need our shadows so we can see that every human being on the earth is affected by the journey of where birth, life and death have economically, socially, racially and genetically placed them in history. Yesterday, in the CTV and Canadian news AM Michael Hayden and Researcher Rob Brown brought to light a frightening story of bias and discrimination. Rob has Huntington's disease and he is desperately researching for a cure for many reasons but for one in particular. Rob shares that the genetic testing for being predisposed to certain illnesses is causing unfair treatment by parents, families, universities and employers. In fact, some universities and employers have already stated that based on genetic test results, they would be inclined to deny entrance or employment to individuals they perceived would not be physically or emotionally healthy people. Hum. So if genetic testing can prove that homosexuals are born, then the right wingers could say that I was genetically diseased at birth or a physical accident at best and therefore my life, my gifts and ability to love and be loved would be medically labeled useless. In Matthew Fox's book, *The Original Blessing*, he writes that "Science...has arrived at the fact that any given human population will be ten percent homosexual". We think we have a homeless population problem now, just wait, because this new form of discrimination is due to be

widespread very soon. At the University of Calgary there is now a Registry Classification Checklist and a Registry of Resources for Safe and Inclusive Schools for the GLBTQ community with over a dozen support groups to help with racism, discrimination and bullying (buymedia@ucalgary.ca).

Fox also shares that when we look at the West and listen to the reasons oppressors give for being bullies, we find a sad common thread. Whether it's the blacks or the Jews, the Aboriginal or the homosexual or the woman, the oppressors state that in some way, these people are or do something against nature and therefore are naturally 'below' those who pronounce their destiny. Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas wrote that women were "misbegotten males" and John Marston wrote that women were "made of blood without souls". The Spanish Conquistadors believed that the Natives did not have souls and should be hunted down and killed. Folks, what kind of theology or institution dehumanize people by social or medical analysis?

Every one of us on the planet must cast a shadow in order to know we are alive and each of us must learn to stand up and look around ourselves so we do not trip on our pride and fall into the assumptions, words and judgements we have placed others. History shows us that every pit we fall into is man-made, either by ourselves or by another because we have become blind past our noses. In fact, the Rorschach test reveals that every shadow we see in another, every worldview we use as our lens into the world, is a piece of our own projection and if we believe we have no shadow, we become enslaved into our self-fulfilling prophecies. When Jesus said, "Love your neighbour as yourself", he was teaching that we need to anchor ourselves in a lifestyle that intentionally uses a lens that makes existential decisions to be humble, vulnerable and trustworthy people. I believe one of our deepest problems around bias and discrimination lies deep within each one of us and our problem is we do not trust ourselves when we are not congruent on the inside. We use a lot of energy trying to convince ourselves that our shadows are far away. So it isn't surprising to hear so many people share that they feel like they are falling upward into a lonelier and spiritually messy world. Our Creator's heart breaks watching the loneliness of other because every person was created with divine intention to be in spiritual and physical relationships with others and with the world. Religion, spirituality, contemplation and even modern liberal and conservative theologies are still leading us to become people of independence instead of inter-dependence. No matter how life changing an experience has been in our lives, we still end up with a "Me and Them" lens. At the best of times, (Crossan and Watts: "Who Is Jesus?"), we are still striving for kingdom and not community living. We are still missing the reason we say, "For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever" in the Lord's Prayer. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is within you", teaching us that there is no need for an empirical throne when love is the only rule needed to plant and sustain a family or community.

Love? If I love myself, then I will own my shadow. If I love myself, I will be openly responsible for my words and actions and stop living a life of projection, denial and self-deception. If I love myself, I will step into my gifts, and discover joy by offering them

when it is appropriate and to the one needs my gifts in the moment. If I love myself, I will refuse to sit on my inner throne and judge what is different or something I have not or do not understand or desire to experience. If I love myself, I will be free to see what is truly an act of injustice and like Jesus, I will be able to speak to the few issues that are at the roots of all evil. If I love myself, I will not only be able to open my table to my enemies, I will be empowered to serve them. Why? Because I will be loving me with my Creator's light - love and call to shadow – accountability and this kind of inward community lived inside-out has no room for thrones. The Gospel of the past is the gospel of our now and the future. The Gospel is the good news that God is with us. God is inside of you and inside of me and inside of the different ones, the less educated ones, the rich ones, the poor, the sick and the dying, the young and the strong, the liberal and the conservative, the extreme right winger and the ones who sit out on a limb with Shirley McClain. The Gospel has always been the good news that begins with an open and inclusive invitation for all of us to live in community with one another. When will we embrace this good news? When we stop pointing out the differences in others and begin to unite ourselves with our own shadows and cast away our fears of living fully into the joy of our gifts and personalities. When we learn how to dance with the sun and the moon inside of ourselves, there will be no room on our inner dance floor for bias. When red and yellow, black and white appreciate the beauty in one another's music of the heart, we will enjoy a holy symphony that no eye has seen and no ear has heard.

We have a choice today, a choice to do the work of loving ourselves so we may live with contentment and joy inside our own skin. Today, we are free to choose to love others and we are also free to choose the four letter words we want to live into such as : LIKE, HATE, HURT – LOSS - GAIN – SICK – POOR – RICH – LAZY – FAST - ACHE HEAL - BOMB – HELP - EVER – HOPE – HOMO - GIVE - TAKE JAIL SAFE – TRUE – LAZE – KIND – COLD – POUR – KEEP- OPEN- SHUT. WOMB – TOMB – STAY – TURN – we can choose these words and many more and then wait for the fuzzy warm feeling to befriend us while believe their lies. Or we can choose the work of LOVE that frees us to become the unbiased community of God on the earth.

Our world, our work, our faith communities, our homes and our marriages are reflections of what we think about ourselves. Are we investing ourselves in the lie of LIKING ourselves and reaping what we sow or we investing ourselves in the work of loving ourselves and becoming the change the Holy created us to be in the world?

An old lady had a hearing-aid fitted, hidden underneath her hair. A week later she returned to the doctor for her check-up.

"It's wonderful - I can hear everything now," she reported very happily to the doctor.

"And is your family pleased too?" asked the doctor.

"Oh I haven't told them yet," said the old lady, "And I've changed my will twice already."

Friends, the only difference in these next two words are two letters: Holocaust - Holy Cast. What will we choose to be? May we choose to embrace our shadows and see the face of God in all persons. Namaste.

This next "HOW TO" was not in my sermon on Sunday, however I have added it for those who might ask the question: "How do we become humble people?"

1. Access ourselves honestly.
2. Don't take financial, educational or vocational success too seriously.
3. Celebrate the significance of others
4. Don't be demanding
5. Never boast.
6. Think and speak humbly.
7. Live at the foot of the cross so we may be humble enough to know the difference living into what is true for ourselves and judging others for their ways of being.
May we be humble enough to die for is true than to live for what is wrong.