

Malinda Clatterbuck
October 27, 2019
We're all in this together...

I am constantly amazed at the interconnectedness of ... all of this- all of life- all of humanity. I have a story to share- something that happened just yesterday- that was not going to be a part of my sermon- but forced its way in. Hannah and I went to the Renaissance Faire yesterday- partly due to the generosity of our own Darrell Yoder, who offered us a free ticket. As I was waiting in line to purchase my ticket, I got to talking with the woman in front of me. She was a now single, 43-year-old mother who has four adult children. The oldest 26. She was beautiful and joyful and we chatted about the faire and how she brings one of her kids almost every year, but this year she was alone. She is a runner. She used to live in the southern end just around the corner from where I live. Then she told me that she lost her oldest son a year ago. Never said how, but we cried and talked some more. She told me how her loss empowered her to get out of a bad relationship. And how she moved to York to be closer to her living children. And at some point she said, "I know it's cliché but- we're all in this together- right?" I had one of the reactions, like worlds were colliding somewhere. I told her that those exact words were the title for my sermon the next day. We both almost cried again. When it was her turn to go purchase her ticket she did so, then turned around and handed me one too and said she bought my ticket— enjoy my first RenFaire— and payitforward.

We're all in this together. I am being ambitious with my goals this morning- but my friend in the ticket line inspired me to hope that we can have moments of raw connection- talking about hard things- laughing and enjoying each other and the world around us- even in the midst of the painful realities we also carry.

Earlier this year Linda Crockett, of Samaritan's Counseling Center, came and gave a presentation at CMCL. Linda is the guru of Safe Church Training in the area, and she spoke about best practices that churches can adopt to ensure their churches are doing the best they can to keep the children in their care safe. She challenged us- how can we have a safe church policy where we create a safe space in the community that is our church, if only those working with children go through the training and are familiar with the policy? That number here is much less than 50%. She highly recommended we regularly bring the topic to the pulpit so the

greater community gains a better understanding of our policy- what is behind it- and how we are all responsible in creating a safe space in this place. Because we are all in this together.

In addition, I come to this task also holding the lectionary reading from Luke, the parable of the pharisee and the tax collector, and I am continuing with our theme of “hidden figures.” Believe it or not- these three themes flow well together.

Let’s begin by looking at this parable of Jesus from the Scripture.

The author introduces the parable- by explaining that Jesus told this parable to “some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt.”

So- it really is a tale of correction, right? Correction for those who “trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and regarded others with contempt.”

For those of us who are familiar with the enneagram, I have a confession to make. I am a One, the Good Person or the Perfectionist. And for those of you who don’t know the enneagram, you’ll still get the picture. This issue of trusting myself to have a clear and “right” sense of what is righteous is my constant shadow work. I work really hard to be Not judging and critical of others- but me thinking that I have a sense of “The. Right. Thing.” haunts my every waking moment in just about every area of my life- from marriage to parenting to pastoring to community organizing. What this looks like is... I try really hard to do the right thing all the time- causing as little harm to anyone else as possible.

And those are not bad goals to have...

But if I am to be honest with myself, and I guess now with all of you, I think I sometimes come to the temple – this temple- any temple... as the Pharisee- with my self-righteous hat on- at least “trusting in my own righteousness” if not also sometimes “holding others with contempt.” Oh I don’t judge people for drinking alcohol, or having sex outside of marriage- those edges are way past for me. But I do judge people for judging those who drink alcohol and who have sex outside of marriage- and you know what? this too is a form of haughtiness.

This is the truth of my struggle.

I have another confession to make. There is **oh** so much more to me than the face of the pharisee, right? Than the shadow side of my One personality. I have other

“hidden figures” if you will, within me, that also identify parts of my authentic self. There are times I am also that tax collector, who comes to the temple hanging my head, saying simply, “I messed up – I’m sorry”.

I suggest all of us consider ourselves within this framework. That we – each of us- has hidden figures with in us- as parts of our true selves- our authentic selves- our human selves- that are sometimes conflicting. We tend to label them as “sinner or saint”- “good or bad.” But we don’t always need to be labeled as polar opposites. Sometimes the varied faces of who we are- the hidden figures with in us- our shadow sides that keep us humble- or joyous sides that are too shy to be revealed... they are just different roles of the complex truth of our humanity.

And I wonder if we think of ourselves in this light- if we might be able to be more open to a more whole- more accurate and more authentic picture and presentation of who we are- in our struggles and in our strengths- As the pharisee and as the tax-collector-**and** as oh so much more.

I wonder- if we think of **others** in this light if we might be able to be more open and accepting of all of their humanity- seeing a more accurate and authentic picture of who our neighbor is. And in so doing-creating a more safe space.

I want to emphasize that we- all of us- have multiple faces- hidden figures that, combined, tell the true story of who we are. And it is my desire that this church building and the people who enter it- find space where they are free to reveal these many hidden figures.

But that would be a test of our love-as a community, right? Because— are we prepared to love and accept any face that is revealed among us? I’ll leave that question for us all to ponder in our hearts. Are we prepared to accept any face that is revealed among us?

And should we?

I am grappling with what it means to have a safe community. Of what it means to be a part of creating safe space. Of what it means to be NOT judging- and yet to see the truth of those around us. Jesus told this parable for the haughty to learn that humility is better than bragging. But in order to be humble, we have to start

by being as honest with ourselves as we can about who we are. We need to use discernment to decide how and when to trust others. We cannot hide behind naïveté.

Because sometimes some of the hidden figures within us consistently do damage to others. And sometimes to create a safe community- there are figures that cannot be free to move among us.

I want to show you a video Linda Crockett shared with us as a part of her presentation- It is a song by Lady Gaga- and is actually the only song I know by her- (sorry Lady Gaga Fans). I warn you- there are two times she says the word Hell-

(Lady Gaga...video- Til it happens to you, from the Oscars 2016)

One in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused by the age of 18 in the U.S.

Statistics have not changed much in the past 20 years...you can look around the room and do the math.

Since the exposure of the Catholic Church scandal of hiding perpetrators for the sake of protecting the institution, we have known that churches are one place that people go to find easy access to children. And just to be clear- the number of abuse accusations in other denominations are roughly the same as in the Catholic Church.

We have a safe church policy here for three main reasons.

1. We want to be sure that children are not abused here- and if they have been abused elsewhere- we want them to find space here to speak their hidden truth in order to find help and healing.

2. We want to be sure that our adults working with children are protected from being falsely accused by any hurting or desperate individual.

- And 3. We want to be sure that no one finds themselves in a situation where they have an opportunity to act on their most base desires to become a predator or perpetrator on our watch and in our building.

We aren't trying to make life difficult for everyone else in the church- forcing people to jump through hoops for no reason. We are taking our responsibility seriously to create a safe place for all of us.

Ninety percent of those abused know their abuser. The idea of Stranger Danger is a myth of old that we can dispel with it.

And we don't go over all of these statistics to scare folks- or that people might gain a great sense of fear- but that we might all have a greater awareness. It is not possible to create a safe community if we deny to see the reality of the world in which we live.

Our policy is 18 pages- I'm sure you all read it right? (smile) Right, most people won't read it all. Our Safe Church Committee created a 2-page Safe Church 101- which you should have in your hand. I ask you to take a look at that with me.

(read the beginning)

"We desire for all at our church to know and believe that they are known and loved by God. From this knowledge we believe we are compelled to live and move and interact with one another in ways that are respectful and life giving, and not damaging or unnecessarily hurtful. Our Safe Church Policy comes out of this conviction. We strive to ensure that every living being coming through our doors will be safe. Showing love and affection in proper ways is so important. This policy is to provide guidelines for that love to be spread in healthy and safe ways."

It is broken up into four sections- definitions of abuse, clarifications on what is healthy touch and what is appropriate here regarding discipline, other actions we have taken here at CMCL to create a safe environment for our children, & what it means to be an Approved Adult.

Read through it- let me know if you have questions.

(read closing)

"Living and worshipping in community, we have an obligation to love one another well. Holding one another accountable for the safety of our children and our adults is one of the best ways we can do this. Let us work together in respect and diligence to keep our community safe."

Because we are all in this together.

I hope to have some real connections and conversations with more of you in the coming months- like I had with a stranger standing in the ticket line at the

RenFaire. Space where we can laugh, and cry, and show a few of the hidden figures we carry. Building trust and friendship. Finding comfort and Empathy. Moving in and out of the lives of our children here- showing the example of a loving community- together- Amen.