

Room of Shame –

Making ready the Guest Room

1 Samuel 3:1-20

John 1:43-51

Slide: Home

Jim and I have been recently going through the journey of home repair and remodeling. Our house is a very old early Victorian – one of the older houses in Eau Claire being just over 150 years. Abraham Lincoln was still alive when our house was built! Therefore, it does pretty much always need something done to it, as I'm certain many of you who own old homes can relate. The charm of our home drew us to buying it in the first place, but with any old house, there are a few drawbacks. Storage is one of those drawbacks.

Our basement is an unfinished basement, basically housing our air conditioner unit, humidifier, furnace and a bunch of tools, but because it's essentially an old root cellar, that's about all it's good for. I wouldn't put much else down there. This leads to a room we have in our house that we have dubbed with humor the "Room

of Shame". The room of shame, which could be a lovely guest room, is where we put all our things we don't use, have little use of, or don't want to see. Our Goodwill or Hope Gospel pile goes in there. Our old computers that need recycling go in there (sometimes, they don't come out for a year or two!).

Our camping gear, seasonal decorations, boxes of stuff, all those things go in the "Room of Shame". There is simply no other place to put them all. And, once we throw it in there, we often can't find it again, or things get put in the wrong place, only to see a highly disorganized blob. So, you can see why we call it that, just as the poor dog has to endure a cone of shame, we have to endure the Room of Shame.

Slide: Cone of Shame

Now, the Room of Shame is acceptable for the most part because it's closed to the whole world. I hate to go in there. The rest of the house is orderly, clean, and for the most part, I know where things are. If we

have something that has no purpose or is seasonal, put it in the “Room of Shame.”

It’s not like we don’t want it to change. We often talk about cleaning out the Room of Shame, which is why it got a title of such distinction at all. It’s THAT ROOM – the room we don’t go in unless we have to.

Slide: Christmas Crazy

Right around this Christmas, which you may understand is often a stressful time for pastors, I kept waking up startled from the same dream that I thought I had a guest staying in my home with nowhere but the Room of Shame to sleep in. I would wake up feeling embarrassed that they had to stay there, that there was no room for them and that they had to sleep surrounded by that mess. How inhospitable. And, then I would realize it was a dream, that I have an actual guest room and that I would NEVER have someone stay in that room.

In relaying this dream to a clergy friend, she said, “Well, it is Christmas. Maybe your guest is Jesus. It’s not like with all the work you have to do that you have room for him to stay.” Of course, as we joked about that, it probably isn’t untrue. In preparing for Christ to come for Christmas, pastors are often the last to find room for him. Pastors are working hard to make that happen for others more than for themselves. Usually, the Christ child finds the Room of Shame in my brain and heart during Christmas because I’m just too busy...and yet, perhaps you can relate, too.

Slide: Boy listening

It says in the reading from 1st Samuel that the “Word of the Lord was rare in those days.” The boy Samuel couldn’t have even dared to think that the Lord was calling out of a dream in the middle of the night, telling him that a guest was indeed coming to stay. Samuel wasn’t ready for God to come. He knew nothing of the Lord, let alone how to respond. He had to be told to say, “Speak Lord, for your

servant is listening.” Most definitely, Samuel had to be confused as to who was calling him.

And so I listen in today as the boy Samuel is being summoned, called by name to follow the way of God, and I would imagine that together, you and I can both understand his confusion for it. After all, does God still call us in the night, like a dream, reminding us that Jesus is coming to stay? Are we ready? Or, is our guest room a mess?

Slide: Epiphany

After Christmas, we enter a time in the Church calendar where the Bible readings at worship center upon discipleship; that is, our response to that Christmas promise: that Jesus came as the human one to be with us and that while he was with us, he called us to his ministry, a ministry that he shared with us while he walked among us. This time after Epiphany is full of these discipleship stories to help us prepare for the time of Lent, which although still four weeks away, is something for

which we make room. So, the time of Epiphany is a preparation for the time of preparation so to speak. We work on our discipleship during this time so that we may hear how God works on us during the journey of Lent. These weeks actually have more purpose than we think.

So, in these weeks after Christmas, we hear stories about the ministry of Jesus. Among the first things Jesus did after he was baptized by John was to call the disciples. One of those stories we heard today was from John’s Gospel. In this story, Jesus calls Phillip and Nathaniel to make room for who the writer of Mark’s Gospel calls the Son of Man. The voice of Jesus calls these disciples to unique places throughout his ministry. But, these disciples have to be open to this ministry and to make room for it.

It’s not that different for us. We may not have been the ones who walked with Jesus, who dropped everything to follow him, but we desire to hear God speak to us still

today. That's why we bother to come in here every week – we long for that relational word, that word of healing and presence. We desire to follow Jesus and serve him and his people, but we often have a hard time finding space to do so, in our time but also in our very being.

Because, and let's all admit this together, we often have that spiritual room of clutter, not unlike that real "Room of Shame" that I have in my house. For each of us, that clutter can be an impediment to hear that call. It can be as confusing to understand it as it was for Samuel. It can be difficult to prepare for the guest, Jesus, who desires to stay with us and to be present with us. Sometimes, with the din around us, we can't know that the call to discipleship is always there.

For each of us, it is different what that calling to serve and be in the world is. But, I'm going to guess that each one of us knows some of the things which impede us from a closer relationship with the Almighty God. Even in

our desire to change things, it's often easier to just stack all the mess away where we can't see it or have to deal with it. Being with the clutter or the difficulty is harder, but it just may be the path to greater health in faith but also in body, mind, and spirit.

Do you have a guest room ready for Christ when he comes to call? In what way today can you look into that messy, cluttered place where Jesus wants to stay, so that you may hear the voice of God better? What part of your life is getting in the way of your faith or of noticing the presence of God in your everyday life? As the New Year often brings about desires of change, I'm certain you can see that need to change in your own faith life.

Perhaps it's giving up something so you can work on that. Perhaps it's a health habit or a change in vocation. Perhaps it's opening up Scripture or attending Adult Education as intimidating as the Bible I know can be for many people. Opening up yourself to Jesus coming in as a

guest in your life often means change.

But, no matter what that guest room looks like in your life, there is hope; for God knows your struggle, your habits, and your failures. In all of that, God continues to call you to special places and relationship. And, God continues to be the loving source of grace, clutter and all. And, God knows you by name. If God called Samuel, Phillip, Nathaniel and all those others in women and men in Scripture, God calls you as the baptized beloved child of God that you are, too.

But, do you know in what way you are called? Have you discerned that purpose? Have you taken some moments in time to look at the mess to work on so that you can better hear the desire and purpose God has for you? Closing the door to the clutter may be easier but it certainly is not less freeing.

This time of discipleship, of the New Year, this time of preparation for Lent is a great time to stop and think about

working upon that faith and blessed relationship which God desires to have with you. God is calling in the clutter of your lives. It's time to get ready the guest room.

Amen.