

**Who Are My Children?
Mother's Day
May 11, 2019**

The disciples are out and about with Jesus. (Luke 9:49-50)

“Master,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name
and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us.”

“Do not stop him,” Jesus said, “for whoever is not against you is for you.”

He's not one of US! He's not on team Jesus! He's one of the THEM!

Luke 9:51-54

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven,
Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village
to get things ready for him;

(He was in Galilee and had to go south through Samaria to get to Jerusalem)
but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem.

When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked,

“Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?”

“You don't know what spirit you are of,” said Jesus.

You're going to let them snub us like that?

To the Samaritans, the Jews are not one of US, they are the THEM!

To the Disciples, The Samaritans are not one of US. They are the THEM

Mark 10

One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them.
But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him.

They are not old enough, (knowledgeable enough, important enough) to be an US.
They are the THEM!

You see, there is US and then there is THEM!

We know who the USs are.

They are the ones who think like us.

Look like us.

Believe like us.

Vote like us.

We know who the THEMs are:

They're all the people who are not one of US.

It's absolutely human to love categories and to love labels;
but it is not godly.

Why are we this way?

It's human cause it gives us an intoxicating sense of superiority
If someone else or some other group is foolish, stupid or ignorant
that means that I'm not.

I'm a leg up. A bit better.

Behind every labeler is a person who sees themselves as a little better than them.
Behind every labeler is a person who is not yet completely free.

Every ounce of energy that we spent critiquing the THEMs,
is a bucket load of energy you are NOT spending becoming whole and healthy;
a bucket load of energy we're NOT spending on creating something new.

But to be fair, many times we simply inherited categories

It was just in the water we drink.

We absorb it from our culture.

The Samaritans ase in point.

Why didn't the Samaritans want to let Jesus and his disciples
go through Samaria to get to Jerusalem?

They had probably never met Jesus or any of his disciples
so as to have anything against them personally.

No, they were just born into a world where Jews are bad, Samaritans are good.

Why did James and John want to call down fire?

Had they even met the people who said, "Sorry, road closed."

No, they were just born into a world where Samaritans are bad and Jews are good.

Everybody knew that!

Everybody . . . *except* Jesus who wasn't going to buy it!

So on one trip through Samaria, what does Jesus do?

He breaks every rule in the book.

We saw the video

He strikes up a conversation with not only a *Samaritan*, but a *women*!
And not only a woman, but a social outcast.
(*That's why she comes alone in the heat of the day when all the other villagers were resting.*)
And not only a social outcast, but a woman living in an immoral lifestyle.
In every sense of the word, she was a THEM!
The disciples are shocked when they came back and saw Jesus talking to her;
they knew they a cut above (a couple of cuts above) her category.

And not only are US and THEM labels intoxicating for our ego
and inherited from our culture,
but they are reinforced by territory.

Humans are by nature territorial.
We are land-locked.

Let me take you back a about 3 thousand years to a story that illustrates
how embedded our land-locked beliefs are.

Some of you may remember the story of Naaman from Syria
who came to Elijah in Israel to be healed of leprosy.
When he leaves to go home to Syria, he makes a strange request.
Can I please take some dirt home – as much as my donkey can carry.

Why on earth does he want some earth?
Cause people believed that the God of a certain people lived in the land,
literally the earth on which the people walked.
If he wanted to worship the God of Israel,
he needed to have some of their dirt – their land to worship on.

Now we shake our heads and say, **How primitive!**

But apparently, this primitive thinking was still very much alive in Jesus' day.

Did you notice that during Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well
that she brings up the age-old question,
“Where are we supposed to worship? On *our* mountain or on *yours*?”
Whose land is holy?
Or you might say, “Where *is* the holy land?”

How does Jesus respond? (John 4:22-24)

. . . a time is coming and now is when you will worship the Father
neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem . . .
the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth,
for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

We are territorial – Jesus is NOT.

We are land-locked – Jesus is NOT.

Do, have we discarded those primitive land-locked categories?

One trip to the Holy Land reminded me that we have not.

People, including Christians in America and around the world,
are still deeply invested in the debate of who gets to build a temple
on *THE* piece of land where the original temple of Israel stood.

Is it the Muslims with the Dome of the Rock?

Is it the Jewish Temple that will be rebuilt?

Will it be the home of Jesus (for the Christians)

or the home of the Messiah we haven't yet met (for the Jews)?

This piece of LAND has spawned "holy" wars for thousands of years.

We *still* have a very land-locked US and THEM view of the world.

We still haven't grasped how revolutionary Jesus' words were:

The disciples are with Jesus in Jerusalem,

praising the brick and mortar temple and Jesus says,

'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' . . .

But he was speaking of the temple of his body. (John 2:19, 21)

Paul says:

[The church is] *the temple of the living God*. (2 Corinthians 6:16)

The Apostle John records his visions of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven
at the end of days in the book of Revelation. (Revelation 21:22)

I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

And yet we have Christians today who want to go to war to secure a piece of land
somehow believing that prophesy can't fulfilled without it.

Can you imagine Jesus or the Apostles going to war over which piece of land
is more sacred than another?

Jesus was not landlocked.
Jesus did NOT think in US and THEM categories.
Jesus threw away labels.
So how do we STOP thinking in US and THEM categories?

We do what Jesus did.
He didn't see categories, he saw people.

He didn't see a Samaritan
He didn't see a woman.
He didn't see an *immoral* woman.
He saw a thirsty soul.

Jesus doesn't see an immigrant, a refugee, a foreigner, a democrat, a republican
He sees thirsty souls.

Pastor Sam Vassal, our new DS spoke passionately yesterday at District Assembly.
He asked, "What is the one cause we as Christians must be compelled to address
to be faithful to Jesus?"

He read to us from **Leviticus 19:33-34**.

What a foreigner resides with you in the land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Now certainly we border security and immigration laws,
but they must be shaped by a heart that doesn't categorize them as the other, the them.

So how do we get there?

Do what Jesus did, make a human connection.

I'm no more immune to the political climate than you are.
It can so easily get baited into the fray.
and SO EASILY begin to think in US and THEM categories.

I realized *I* needed to be the one to make a human connection
with someone with whom I strongly disagreed.

God must have thought that was a good idea too, because he set it up.

So for my birthday God placed it in my heart to go visit my relatives in Idaho.
I figured that even the most conservative person in the North East
would be considered a flaming liberal in Idaho.
I determined *never* mention a word about politics.

We're there not more than 10 minutes, when my brother-in-law, Doug says,
So, what do you think of the 2nd amendment?
And, a bit to my horror, I find out he packs a concealed weapon AT ALL TIMES!
That's legal in Idaho without a special permit.

We ended up talking politics and theology the whole time.
But here was the God part.
The bond of family was so strong,
and our mutual respect for one another was so genuine,
that our discussion never broke our unity.

We both walked away no longer able to cast the other
in our previously labeled categories.

Once you make a human connection with a THEM, they are no longer a THEM.

If you find even one person who doesn't fit your bias of who the THEMs are,
the label ceases to be true.

Make a human connection with a THEM and you discover the truth of Eph 4:6.
[There is] **one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**

When we go down deep enough, there is a unity that unifies all things.

So, what can you do in your everyday life to live out this truth?

You can join the resistance movement.
Resistance against GNT

What's GNT? A deadly disease! And it's contagious!
GNT – General Negative Tone
It's all that grumbling and complaining about the THEM's

It's everywhere.

You go to school –there it is
You go to work –there it is.
You go home????
You go to serve in your ministry????

So what does it look like to join the GNT resistance movement?

It looks like **Gloria**

She has a boss who takes GNT to a new level!

Always grumbling about some THEM.

Gloria has to pray just to get through the day.

But do you know what her co-worker said?

“You have such a calm and peaceful disposition.”

She refuses to participate in the GNT and brings a different tone.

It looks like **Gina**

Gina works part time at Katherine’s Dress Shop.

She was going crazy because of the GNT all around.

She had a choice – join in and be one of the crowd.

Just avoid talking to anyone at work.

OR – change the tone.

She started looking for creative ways to change the tone, to bring positivity, humor.

So she gets to work the other day and her co-worker says,

Oh, good. YOU’RE working tonight.

You’re always so positive and make me laugh.

I’ve had such a hard day, and you always brighten my day.

How do people see you?

As grumblers and complainers?

Or as positive, grateful people

A person who refuse to use labels to categorize and diminish other people?

If you want to join the GNT resistance movement it means . . .

It means no more that communal rolling of the eye

no more dismissive gesture that diminishes the other human being

no more laughter at another’s expense.

It’s going to take some serious consciousness raising.

You can call me on it when you see me doing it.

No excuses, like the man, who was attempting to justify his US and THEM thinking,
comes to Jesus and says,

I know the Scriptures say to love your neighbor as yourself,

But . . . Who *is* my neighbor?

(Certainly not the *Samaritan!*)

Of course, we know the story of the Good Samaritan which Jesus told
to smash his US and THEM labels to smithereens.

So, this morning, on Mother's Day, I have a question for us.

I love my children.

Of course, God *wants* me to love my children.

But I ask, Lord, who are my children?

Just how far is my Mother's heart supposed to extend.

How appropriate on Mother's Day and on Mission Day to hear God's reply . . .

Jesus loves the little children

All the children of the world