

Imperfect People, Perfectly Loved

July 26, 2015

First Presbyterian Church – Coeur d'Alene

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Message Series: Imperfect People

Message: Part 2 of 6

Scripture Text: Numbers 20:10-13

1. We are spending the summer looking at some imperfect people of the Bible and this week we come to a character in the Old Testament named Moses.
 - a. I've found if I say there's imperfection in the world, and that everyone struggles with it, most rational people agree with me. Even if there are differences of opinion about why or who's to blame.
 - i. And I've also found that it's a universal hope that perfection is still out there as a possibility, even if we differ about how to get there and what it looks like.
 - b. So what do you do when the imperfection affects your life? Do you just take it on the chin or try to do something about it?
 - i. My daughter has been taking Drivers Ed over the summer (that's not meant to be a disguised warning!)
 - ii. Her experiences brought me back to my High School drivers ed program where the cars had a passenger-side steering wheel and brake so the instructor could take over if the student driver was steering toward disaster.
 - c. The Bible doesn't just present the imperfections of people, but also the imperfect ways people respond to the imperfections of people.
 - i. Over and over, it says our default setting when things don't go as they should is to: (1) take control from God, (2) blame God for not doing it right, and (3) in the process, make a bad situation much worse.
 - d. As I was trying to write this message on Friday, I learned about 1stPres member Joan Sander's death in a car accident on her way to their Priest Lake cabin.
 - i. The imperfections of this imperfect world hit me like a sledgehammer to the gut, knocking the wind out of me, engulfing me in a rush of confusion, pain and sadness.
 - ii. I immediately needed to do something, to do my pastor thing and make things better. But I couldn't – the family was out of contact in Priest Lake. I felt helpless.
 - iii. And then I started to feel angry at the situation, and then at God. It seemed so pointless to take Joan. Her husband and family need her. We need her. I need her.
 - iv. I had a strong urge to get in my truck and head to Priest Lake even though I had no idea where to find the family. At least I would look like I was doing something.



- v. And you know what? I see this need to control all through my life and relationship with God.

2. This is the basic storyline of Moses in Numbers 20

- a. Read Numbers 20:1-12.
- b. This isn't the first time the Israelites acted imperfectly by complaining. So we have a pretty good record of what Moses was supposed to do: let God speak, trust him to know what was best to do for his people, serve as God's instrument.



- i. That's not what Moses does. God said to speak to the rock. Yes. In the past Moses had struck it with his staff to bring forth water. But he only needed to do it once. Moses hits it twice.
- ii. He says "shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" Not "shall God do it?" but "shall we

do it?"

- c. The point isn't whether Moses had reasons to be upset. He did. 20:1 says his sister, Miriam had just died. He was grieving her loss, I'm sure.
 - i. They were back in the Wilderness of Zin, a place where almost 40 years earlier the people rebelled against God and were blocked from going straight into the Promised Land and forced to wander back and forth. Moses was thinking, "Here we go again – we'll never get there."
- d. The point is the way he handled the situation, and what it revealed about how Moses felt about God's authority, and what it did to undermine Moses' authority at a time when the people needed an example of maturity and obedience in their leader.
 - i. We are not in the same position as the drivers ed instructor. You and I are just as near-sighted, accident prone, and lead-footed as the people we see messing things up. Taking the wheel ourselves doesn't improve the situation at all.

3. Jesus offers a better way.

- a. Read Garden Story in Matthew 26
- b. Go ahead and
 - (1)cry out,
 - (2)express your honest grief, fear, frustration and anger when things don't go the way they should.

- i. The Bible is full of prayers of lament, and God never busts anyone for expressing their doubts and misgivings.
- c. But then reaffirm trust in the graciousness and perfection of the wholeness of God's plan, even if it's hard to see right now, and imperfection seems to be winning the day.

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray."

And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."

And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

