



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

I was wrong_ - The Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany- 2_20_2022

AudioClerk Transcription

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God, our Father, and the Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Father Bill, Father Chris, and I have a weekly clergy meeting. And as we were anticipating what I have so happily termed the Fire Suppression season, while we can't be in our own church sanctuary, we came up with this idea of marking the season by doing a sermon series. And I was really super excited. I thought, oh, this will be lots and lots of fun. And then we came up with the idea of the sermon series, which was songs that help us hear the gospel. And that's what we've been doing this whole time.

And when we finally landed on that, I panicked and I panicked for a couple of reasons. First, picking a song is such an individualized experience, right? It's really personal. And in this day and age with all the streaming technologies we have, well, do you know I have Spotify as my streaming service and at any moment, I can choose any song in their library. And guess how many songs they have in their library? Eighty-two million. So what if I chose a song for the sermon series that you had never heard, is that going to work in a sermon?

So I thought, oh my gosh, you know what? I'm just going to use an oldie, but a goodie. So I thought, well, what about What's Going On by Marvin Gaye? Right? Or Strange Fruit by Billie Holiday? I love those songs that have the power of the prophetic and telling the truth to us because the gospel to me is always about telling the truth so we can be set free. But that felt disingenuous to me because I knew immediately what song helped me hear the gospel recently. And that is why I panicked.

The song spoke to me personally. And for me to introduce this to you meant that I would have to tell you how I heard the gospel through it, revealing to you something very vulnerable about me. And then praying that somehow my particular story will point to a universal truth for you. But you know what? This happens in each and every sermon, right? I mean, the preacher gets up here and he preaches what he thinks is the word from God. And then there you are in the congregation, you are all listening deeply for the word of God, but you know what, really what's the most important is the Holy Spirit. She comes on down and if she feels like mixing it up, she's going to make sure that the word transforms your life. So here goes nothing. And let's see what the spirit will do.

My story begins only a couple of years ago. Troy, my husband and I, we had the distinct privilege of taking care of both sets of our parents as they lived here locally. And we walked all four of them to their deaths. We had their four funerals at Christ Church Cranbrook in two and a half years. 2019, that year before the pandemic was a particularly difficult year for us. At the beginning of the year, my own mother died. At the end of the year, Troy's father died. Troy's dad, Bruce, was the last of our parents to be living. And I was, as I was for all of the parents, his primary caregiver. So I was in charge of all the meds, of all the doctor's appointments, making sure that everything was working for him.

And Troy, my husband took care of our son who was at home. We were a sandwich generation and he made sure that Miles got to all his after school activities and did his homework.

And both of us of course, had full-time jobs as well. And for the most we were able to keep all the balls in the air. But I was exhausted. Helping our parents die had taken its toll on me and with the deaths in such quick succession, I was dealing with what is termed complicated grief, which is the process of handling multiple deaths in a short period of time, not giving you the ability to mourn each person fully.

And Bruce's care, it was particularly challenging. He had dementia and he was confused a lot of the time and upset. We had found this really nice memory care unit for him. And it was a little ways away from our home, but it seemed like they were doing a good job. And I managed to be able to put a phone in his room that he occasionally could figure out how to use. The days that he figured out how to use it, he would call me, I don't know, 12, 13 times that day. And all he would say over and over again is can I leave? Can I get out of here? They're not good. It's not going well. I kept trying to reassure him, it's fine. You're fine. You're right where you need to be. But I was second guessing myself and that took some energy from me and made taking care of Bruce a little bit more difficult.

In 2019, after my mom died, I decided that we needed to see more of Bruce since he was our last living parent. And I took him out of the excellent facility he was in and I put him in a closer one to us so that we could see him more often. But the truth is it was a selfish decision because I wanted to save time on my commute. And I rationalized it and I thought, well, this new place that I'm putting him in, it costs more, so therefore it's going to be way better. I was wrong. I will spare you the saga, but the facility where my father-in-law died neglected his care. By the time that I figured out how bad it was and I paid someone to come and augment his care, it was too late. He died within a week and a half.

Now, in all fairness, he was not well, and his health was deteriorating, but his last days on earth, they were terrible. And I will never know until I see him again, whether the assisted living where I moved him quickened his death. I was

devastated. I was guilty of neglecting the one person who needed me the most. He loved Troy and he loved me and I failed him. Grief is really hard to experience in itself, but grief alongside guilt and remorse and regret is excruciating. And I was a mess. My husband, Troy did his best to assure me that I had done my level best, but I could not stop beating myself up. And I think, you know what this feels like. You do something wrong. You make a really big, bad judgment in error. You make a mistake and it blows up in your face. And that sense of worthlessness and self-loathing can be profound.

Once the numbness of the death wore off, I began to feel the pain acutely and I prayed to God. I asked God to forgive me for failing Bruce. And two things came out of that. First, I went to confession. I highly recommend confession. It gets a bad rap but it's such a misunderstood gift in the church. Confession is not where you go and make a list of all the sins you committed and get forgiveness. Confession is where you hear the good news for you. God knows you have done something wrong. God sees how you did it. God knows your excuses, your mistakes, the ways that you messed up. And God says, I forgive you and I love you. But sometimes you don't believe it.

Father Bill heard my confession and he couldn't have been more wonderful. His words of comfort, they were a balm in Gilead that healed my sin-sick soul. And when he declared that the sins that I had committed against my father-in-law, that they were forgiven, that God and my father-in-law were not angry with me, I cried like a baby. It was such a relief to know that God and Bruce were at peace with me. However, I admit that my own self-disgust remained with me, despite Father Bill's assurances that I was called to forgive myself too, because you know what? I knew better. I knew better. I knew what to do. I knew I should have paid attention. I was seeing some of the reasons that I should have done something different. I could have done something better. Why didn't I?

One morning, just days after my confession, my alarm went off. Now, I have one of those old fashioned clock radio alarms. They're really hard to find nowadays, but when my alarm goes off, this random radio station plays, and that morning, a song came on that I had never heard before. And the lyrics jolted me.

Oh, hey
I had a night, I had a day
I did one million stupid things
I said one billion foolish things
I'm not okay

I got a baseball bat beside my bed
To fight off what's inside my head
To fight off what's behind my meds
I'm lonely, lost in pain

It was as if I wrote that song and then the chorus came, sung by a different voice.

It's alright, it's okay, it's alright, it's okay
You're not a monster, you're a human
And you made a few mistakes

When the Canadian band Mother Mother released this song in 2018, they had no idea that it would receive such a response, but the posts and the emails started flowing in. People who were struggling with feelings of feeling unworthy, like they've screwed up their life so badly, like they made a mistake that couldn't be amended, these people were surprised to hear the voices that were inside their head being sung by the band. And they were even more affected by the chorus.

When Mother Mother made the music video for this, they invited all of those people who wrote to them to star in the video. And the result is a pretty powerful witness to see people like you and me who are struggling with their demons reminding us it's alright. You're okay. You're not a demon. And I think an ancient version of this song, it actually appears in our Old Testament reading for today. Joseph is saying the same thing to his brothers.

Now, if you don't remember the story of Joseph, Joseph is the second youngest of 12 brothers, but he was his dad's favorite. I mean, his dad loved him above and beyond all the other brothers. And he made it really clear. He gave him a special garment, a coat, a coat of many colors. Yeah? And so he wore that coat proudly and he wore it everywhere and his brothers hated him. They couldn't stand him. He was arrogant. He had favor. And so they decided that they had had enough of him. So they sold him into slavery. They took that stupid coat, they covered it with goat's blood, they handed it to dad and said, yeah, he was assaulted and killed.

And Joseph, well, Joseph ended up a slave in Egypt. Then he ended up in prison and then through a miraculous set of events, he ended up being the second in charge with Pharaoh in Egypt and was overseeing all the care of all the grains when a worldwide famine struck. And he made sure that there was food on Egyptians' tables. His brothers are starving in Canaan, so they come over to Egypt. And unbeknownst to them, they end up at the feet of their very own brother. And so the reading for today has Joseph saying to his brothers, I'm Joseph. I'm the one that you sold into slavery.

I always read this story from the victim's perspective, right? I felt really bad for Joseph, what a horrible life to be stuck with. And so I always thought that it had to do with the fact that even the Joseph who was wronged was vindicated by God when the tables were turned. But this time, this time I wondered about those brothers. How did those brothers manage to live with themselves, knowing what they did? How did they feel about themselves when Joseph

confronted them? And we can see in Joseph's conversation with his brothers that he gives them the assurance they need. It's alright. It's okay. Don't be distressed. Don't be angry with yourselves. You made a mistake, but God's going to make good come out of fit.

And this is the gospel for all of us. You may not have sold your sibling into slavery, although you may want to have, but I guarantee each one of us has voices in our head that we need to fight off with baseball bats, reminding us of our major flaws, our major failures, our misjudgments, our miscalculations, the ways that you were just flat out wrong and you didn't do it right. But here's the gospel. It's alright. It's going to be okay, you are not a monster. You are a human being and you make spectacular mistakes, errors, and you do very bad things. And we want so bad for the bad things to be accounted for. We want hurts and injustices to be atoned by retribution, by punitive measures, by payment in kind. And we want the tables turned.

But the answer to evil is a profound word from Christ who is hanging on the cross for our sins. You are alright. You're going to be okay. Y'all aren't monsters, you're just humans. And you've made some glorious mistakes, but I am here and I will make all things new. And I will make it right. And I will make it okay. This is the gospel, the good news for us.

We were hoping to do a live rendition of the song, but circumstances prevented us from doing so. So our phenomenal AB team is going to try to pipe in the original song. And we're hoping that not only can we hear it here, but you can hear it at home. It's a test in this experiment and we'll see how it goes.

This is It's Alright by Mother Mother.

Oh, hey
I had a night, I had a day
I did one million stupid things
I said one billion foolish things
I'm not okay
I got a baseball bat beside my bed
To fight off what inside my head
To fight off what's behind my meds
I'm lonely, lost in pain

It's alright, it's okay, it's alright, it's okay
You're not a monster, just a human
And you made a few mistakes
It's alright, it's okay, it's alright, it's okay
You're not gruesome, just human
And you made a few mistakes
It's alright, oh

It's okay, oh

Goddamn

I throw a brick right through the window
Of my life, ignored the signals
I am high and drunk on ego
Can't see straight
So I just feel my way around man
I am touching, I am grabbing
Everything I can't be havin'
I am broken down in shame

It's alright, it's okay, it's alright, it's okay
You're not a demon, there's a reason
You're behaving that way
It's alright, it's okay, it's alright, it's okay
And I believe, yes, I believe
That you will see a better day
It's alright, oh
It's okay, oh
It's alright, oh
I don't wanna know who I am
'Cause heaven only knows what I find
I don't wanna know I'm not capable of coming out alive
I don't wanna see what's inside
I think that I would rather be blind
I don't wanna know I'm not capable, I'm capable

I'm alright, I'm okay, I'm alright, I'm okay
I'm not a monster, I'm a human
And I made a few mistakes
I'm alright, I'm okay, I'm alright, I'm okay
I'm not gruesome, just human
And I made a few

It's alright, it's okay, it's alright, it's okay
You're not a demon, there's a reason
You're behaving that way
It's alright, it's okay, it's alright, it's okay
And I believe, yes, I believe
That you will see a better day
It's alright, oh
It's okay, oh
It's alright, oh

And I believe, yes, I believe
That you will see a better day
(It's alright)