

It's Time

If you do your doctoring in Red Wing at the Mayo facility, no doubt in the last few months you've noticed signs posted throughout the grounds about Epic. Specifically, the signs explaining that with the Epic electronic records management and scheduling "implementation" things might move a little more slowly. I heard stories from a few of you about some of the challenges you faced while you were waiting on hold or waiting in line or waiting in a waiting room for the computers to catch up with the people.

The Epic implementation is hitting the Rochester campus this spring and they are trying to make the transition as smooth as possible. Some large and complicated departments are undergoing extra training to get ready. My friend Kerry's department is participating in a training to help staff members communicate with one another when things are going poorly with Epic. It's designed to build direct, open and honest communication skills, as well as some de-escalation techniques. The training is called, "We need to talk."

"We need to talk."

Those words remain among the scariest, most anxiety producing words I can hear. "We need to talk" was how my mom would signal something was wrong. Usually it would involve her taking one of us out to breakfast and over pancakes at the Tin Cup, explaining how some choice we were making (usually involving a boyfriend) had her concerned.

It was an intervention.

If you and I text, and you text me "we need to talk" I will automatically panic and spend the time until we actually talk figuring out what is wrong.

You may want to talk about our plans for the weekend; I will still be panicking. My mom has learned to say "Can we talk, nothing's wrong."

Interventions are hard. They come in many forms and often they send up little signals before the big intervention. A doctor might talk to us about our weight or our blood pressure for years before the heart attack or stroke. The hospitalization that follows is an intervention we cannot ignore.

Friends, family and coworkers can notice with us the effects of our depression or eating disorder or casual drug use many times before we enter treatment.

A teenager leaves this dinner plate on the table one too many times, a coworker fails to refill the paper in the copier after repeated reminders to do so, an adult child watches in fear as an older parent gets behind the wheel even though their macular degeneration is so bad they can't see the pedestrians on the sidewalks, and finally they shout out, "this cannot continue!"

Interventions are hard. They let us know that something is wrong and our current trajectory cannot continue.

We don't want to hear the words of an intervention. We don't want to hear, "we need to talk." Chances are, we already know the words of the intervention. We already know we are on a bad path, we already know we've disappointed people and made the same mistake before.

We don't want to hear others say out loud what we already know: this cannot continue. I need to change.

Whew.

Interventions are hard.

With all of the complexity of intervention in mind, let's take a look at the scripture passage for today. Most Bibles title this pericope (or section) of text as "Jesus rebukes Peter." A few title it "Peter rebukes Jesus," which is certainly a bold choice. Peter does rebuke Jesus, but Jesus has the final word, so let's go with "Peter Rebukes Jesus."

A little background on this story. We find it in Mark 8, so it's nearing the end of the stories Mark tells about Jesus. Peter and Jesus already have quite a bit of history-- Peter's been chosen as disciple and responded to the call. Peter's faith has been questioned, during a storm on the lake and later when he's asked to believe that a few fish and loaves of bread can feed a crowd.

From the very beginning of their relationship, Peter wasn't afraid to question Jesus. Certainly there had been times where one of them would say "we need to talk." Throughout their 1 or 2 years together, Peter and Jesus would sometimes get into it.

Jesus has worked to help the disciples understand God's Kingdom, he's told them parables about scattered seeds and weeds and mustard seeds. He asks them after feeding a large crowd of people (the second large crowd Jesus feeds in Mark) "you still don't understand." God's Kingdom isn't like the one you know. It's big and miraculous- it's God sized.

This is important for today's story where Jesus and Peter do some rebuking. The ongoing way that Peter questions Jesus is a big part of what leads up to this confrontation. It's getting dangerous to be Jesus and dangerous to be a follower of Jesus. The religious authorities are paying attention and the political authorities see him as a threat. So when Jesus is boldly healing people and doing miracles and drawing crowds and doing speeches, Peter has had enough. When Jesus goes on to say his actions are leading to his death, Peter tells Jesus to back off.

And Jesus then snaps too. "Peter you are living a small faith. This is God sized stuff we are doing here. Why can't you trust we're doing the right thing? This is a new Kingdom, a new way of looking at things."

Intervention. Jesus has had enough.

He talks to the disciples and tells them, along with a crowd, that following Jesus isn't easy. Following him had risks and consequences and responsibilities.

Intervention.

"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

2,000 years later, what does this text say to us?

Interventions are hard. Is this text asking each of us to consider how we are doing at following Jesus? Is our faith small or God sized? Does our human viewpoint get in the way of what God is up to?

These are hard questions to consider. In what ways is my faith stagnant? In what ways could or should my discipleship change? Have I grown lax in spending time alone with God? Are prayers like sawdust in my mouth? Am I too busy to serve the people who need my help? Has going out to lunch replaced giving to my church?

How would God want me to change the way I'm following Jesus? If God were to speak to my heart and say "we need to talk, what would God say?"
It's not all doom and gloom.

Interventions can lead to wonderful things, things like sobriety, new beginnings, health, all kinds of things.

The very next thing Jesus says is "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it." Following the way of Jesus saves our lives— here and now. Faith makes a difference. Some folks here would tell you that without their faith they wouldn't have made it through the struggles of life. When we check in on our faith and take time to evaluate it, to nurture it, amazing growth can happen.

(There's a whole 'nother sermon on the benefits of pruning!)

The very next story, after Jesus rebukes Peter and calls him out on small faith and timid discipleship, the next story takes place six days later. In that story, Peter and a couple other disciples get a glimpse of the glory of God— in the transfiguration. Peter is embracing the mystery of what Jesus is doing, and quickly sees results.

We see those results too, every day, as we see small things and big things that remind us we are part of God's kingdom work, here and now.

We are part of that work when we live as disciples who pray, who gather together in worship, who give of our time and finances, and who work to change the world- thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

May it be so. Amen.

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