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Aug

Acceptance

Lessons in Leadership

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, YEAR A

This worship focuses on overcoming our natural resistance to God's call, drawing parallels between reluctant biblical leaders and our own modern hesitations. The service provides a space to honestly acknowledge our reluctance to lead or serve, helping the congregation actively move from resistance to acceptance. Ultimately, it encourages us to lean on God and our faith community to boldly fulfill our shared mission together.

REFERENCES

Exodus 3:1-15

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b

Romans 12:9-21

Matthew 16:21-28

COLORS

Green

Worship Planning Notes

Focus text: Exodus 3:1-15, Matthew 16:21-28

I've recently started trying a new approach in my parenting. For some context, I am what some would call a "gentle parent." Now, I know that has many different connotations, so let me explain. For me, being a "gentle parent" is really about teaching my child to navigate his emotions by being present, listening, and helping him recognize and respond in healthy ways to what he's feeling. In our world, there are no bad emotions; there are only good and harmful ways we respond to them.

But that's not the new part. Recently, I've realized that he is at an age where he has a greater capacity to navigate uncomfortable feelings, like boredom and dislike, but he doesn't have a lot of practice. So, when we need to do something that he doesn't like to do, I go to him and say, "Hey, we need to _____. You have thirty minutes to wrap your head around the fact that we are going to do this." More often than not, I get some whining and complaining and resistance, to which I respond, "I hear you. This isn't something you want to do. It still has to be done. You have twenty-five minutes to wrap your mind around that." And nine times out of ten, he does. He accepts that the thing he doesn't like is, in fact, going to happen, so when it's time, he's ready.

As I read our texts for today, I kept wondering if God in the burning bush or Jesus pulling Peter aside felt like I do when I say, "You have twenty-five minutes to wrap your head around this." That sense of knowing the other person will not respond well to what you are saying yet knowing that they need to move from resistance to acceptance. How often are we on the receiving end of the call to lead, ready with all the reasons we can't or shouldn't or don't want to?

Perhaps worship is a gathering where we can help one another move through our resistance toward acceptance of God's call in our lives. Though we all have unique calls, we share a mission to live as the body of Christ and to build the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven, or, as the Council of Bishops recently articulated, "to form disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections." However we describe our mission, we can probably all agree that it's not an easy ask. There are many barriers to loving boldly, serving joyfully, and leading courageously in our world. So, let worship be a time where we help address those barriers through prayer, song, and proclamation. Offer time to sit with all the "I don't want tos." Give the resistance some space to breathe in silent prayer or journaling. And then, encourage one another toward acceptance. Pray a litany of acceptance and encouragement that sets aside the resistance and points the community toward our shared mission. Remind one another that we are not alone; God is with us and has given us this faith community to help us on our way. Commit to moving forward together in grace, acknowledging that some days acceptance will seem far away. Remind one another that on those days, we lean on God and our fellow members in the body of Christ to keep going, believing for and with one another that God who calls us will never leave or forsake us as we learn and re-learn these lessons in leadership.

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