



The Journey

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WHEN LOVE GETS MESSY by Jake Owens

Love is powerful. And complicated. And messy. In the British crime series *River*, Detective John River puts it this way: "There should be more than one word for love. I've seen love that kills, and I've seen love that redeems. I've seen love that believes in the guilty, and love that saves the bereaved. What we will do for love. Die for it even."

Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry famously preaches that love is the only power that will heal and transform our troubled world. And tellingly, he urges us not to grow discouraged. That's because he is both wise and honest. He has experienced for himself what Jesus taught long ago. Love is powerful, and complicated, and messy.

Love is the way. It is the only way. But if you insist on a quick fix that will show immediate results, you'll give up on this love business in a heartbeat. This is why Jesus included what seems to be an incongruous lesson in his love curriculum. He says, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Matthew 10:34)

Love, real love, risks telling hard truths. Risks using a sword. Facing hard truths will set us all free. But before truth sets us free, it's going to make a mess. Jesus warns that even families will turn on one another. Parents against children. Children against parents. Siblings against each other. And yet, like it or not, love propels us at this very moment in our common life to tell hard truths.

I write these words on Juneteenth. On June 19, 1865 the state of Texas declared that all slaves were free. Please note the date. The Civil War had ended in April of the same year. The Emancipation Proclamation had been issued by Abraham Lincoln over two years earlier.

So, strictly speaking, Juneteenth marks delayed emancipation. In 1865. And in 2020. My friend Lady Carlson of Louisiana Interfaith put it this way on her Facebook page, "I was born in 1951, but have always felt like I was born in 1851."

The work of emancipation is not over. The work of dismantling structural racism and defeating white supremacy presses on us with fierce urgency. And yet Jesus himself warns us that love meets opposition and, in any individual's lifetime, is more likely to take us along the way of the cross than to a glorious winner's platform.

Love's opposition comes in many forms. Sometimes - and most newsworthy - that opposition takes the form of hatred and violence. What is more common, and thus harder to overcome, are indifference, timidity, ignorance and self-centeredness. The miracle of love, you see, is that it can make the beloved into one who loves. Being loved can make us lovers. Lovers in the sense that Jesus taught. Loving God with every proton of our being and loving our neighbor as if we shared a common circulatory system.

Loving like this is how you save your life. Paradoxically, you save your life by losing it, Jesus says. You give your life away - again and again - for the good of all. That's what it means to take up your cross.

And still, even though love's power is miraculous, it is not magic. It is not instantaneous. Neither does it seem to make much of a dent on some people. That's why Jesus told his followers to bring peace wherever you go. And if someone doesn't want to receive that peace, shake the dust from your feet and move on.

My friend Mack McCarter - founder of Community Renewal International - taught me to think of it like this. I've had my last argument. I'm going to invite everybody to walk the way of love with me. If they don't like the way I'm walking, I'm not going to try to convince them that I'm right. I'm just going to keep walking. Love is powerful. And complicated. And messy. And I'm going to keep walking the way of love, because I believe that, eventually, love wins.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, July 2**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

3209 Whitesburg Drive, Huntsville, Alabama 35802 Telephone: 256-881-0150 **Leave a message.**

CHANGES IN WORSHIP SERVICES

We will offer an **in-person worship service at 8:15 a.m. in McMains Hall** on Sunday, July 5, followed by a drive-in service at 10:30 a.m. We have limited space at the 8:15 a.m. service so you will need to **call the church office by noon on Thursday, July 2nd, to reserve a place** since we will have limited capacity. You will enter through Family Services for the 8:15 a.m. service. You will need to bring your face mask (we have some if you forget and have hand sanitizer available), your own communion elements, and observe physical distancing when standing or seated (three chairs between you or your family and the next person in McMains). The 8:15 a.m. service will be streamed later that day.

WEEKLY PRAYER CONCERNS

Not Published On Line



The Church office will be closed on Friday, July 3, in observance of Independence Day.



REGIONAL PRAYER REQUEST

New Bethel Christian Church
Greenville, AL

CONGRATULATIONS to Josh & Meleah Stiles on the recent birth of their daughter Evelyn Belle Stile. Mark Stiles is the proud Pawpaw.

SMALL GROUP MEETINGS AT CHURCH

Starting Monday, June 22nd, small groups will be allowed to start meeting inside the Church building in **Family Services**. At this time we can only allow **one meeting a day ending before 5:00 PM** since we will have a professional cleaning company sanitize the room each evening. The schedule for using the Family Services room will be kept in the office. We will also ask you to use the outside Family Services doors, located in our Bell Tower Courtyard on the west side of the church, to enter the building. The door will be unlocked for your meeting.

We ask that:

- You follow social distancing procedures.
- The meeting has less than 10 people.
- You record the names of all participants.
- All participants will wear a mask.

We are temporarily publishing, as space allows in the printed version of the *Journey*, the prayer concerns that are usually listed in the Sunday bulletins. Concerns are listed for one month unless we receive an update. Long term prayer concerns are published monthly in the *Journey*. Send requests to publisher@fcc-hsv.org or call the church office at 256-881-0150 and leave a message.

Please notify the Pastors or the church office if you are going to the hospital and would like to be contacted



THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in honor of Kathi Luzar by Pat Blackman.

We are having some technical difficulties with our streamed services. Services will continue to be posted but not necessarily at the times listed below.

ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES

Stream live at 10:30 am on Sundays (or watch previous services anytime) on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhugUnUhCKw

You may also stream services live on Sundays at 10:30 am (and see announcements throughout the week) on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/fcchsv/

Finally, stream services at 8:15 and 10:30 am on Sunday at: www.twitch.tv/fcchsv

CHILDREN IN THE WILDERNESS

by Talitha Arnold

God was with Ishmael, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. - Genesis 21:20 (NRSV)

Ishmael was a child of the wilderness. Conceived in the wilderness of slavery, he was in utero when his mother Hagar fled to the desert to escape abuse. When his half-brother Isaac was three, Ishmael's father Abram sent the 16-year-old and his mother into the wilderness of Beer-sheba with only "some bread and a skin of water," barely enough to last a day in the desert.

Thanks to divine intervention, Ishmael and his mother lived, but they never went back to his father and his other family. Instead, according to Genesis, the boy grew up and lived in the wilderness for the rest of his life, a hard place to be at any age. Yet God was with the boy, even in the wilderness.

There are children in our time who, like Ishmael, have lived their entire lives in the wilderness. Their desolate places aren't called Beer-sheba or Paran. They may not even be places, but situations with names like Poverty or Racism, Sickness or Hunger. How is God with such children in their wildernesses? As importantly, how are we?

That question becomes more urgent as the Coronavirus spreads across the nation and world. In this pandemic wilderness, as more of God's children – of all ages – face sickness, hunger, and economic despair, how do we offer God's love? What will we give of our lives so that, like Ishmael, God's children will know God is with them in this wilderness?

Prayer

As you were with Ishmael in the desert, be with all your children, O God, in this fearsome time. Give us